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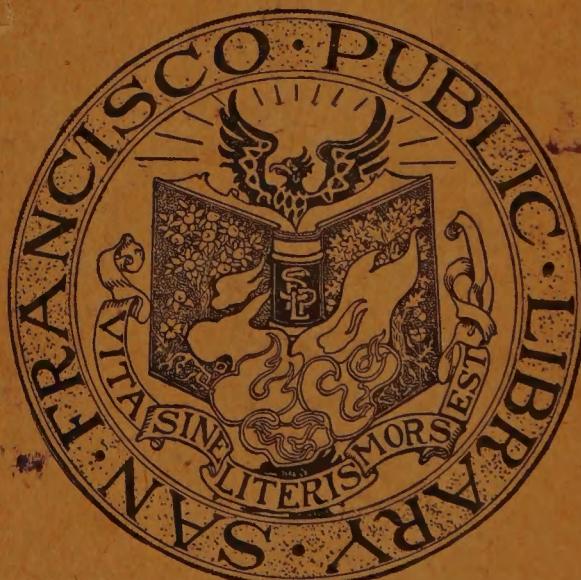
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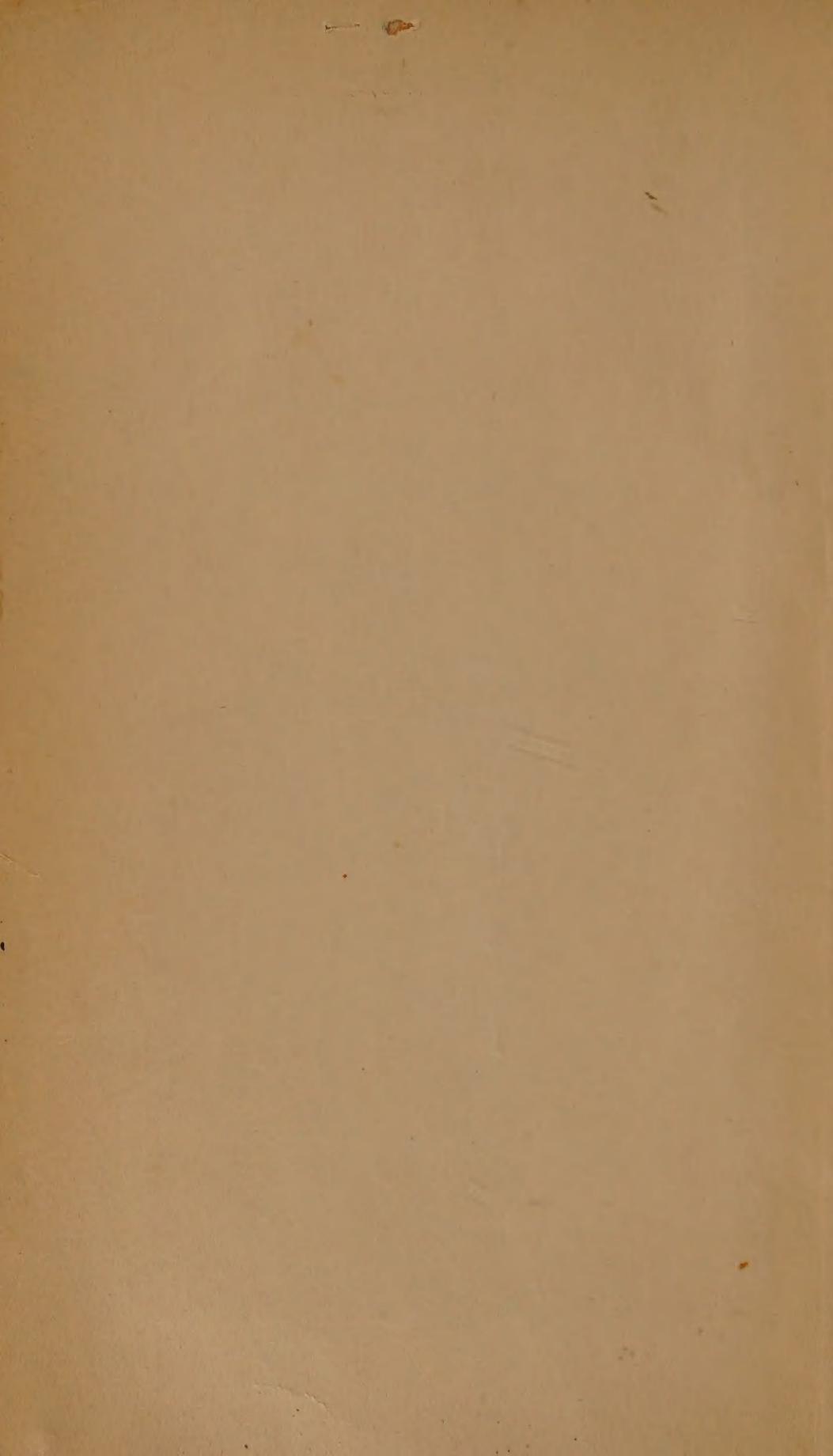
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THE CONFIDANTES OF A KING

The Mistresses of Louis XV

BY
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TRANSLATED BY
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WITH PORTRAITS

VOL. I

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ILLUSTRATION

MADAME DE POMPADOUR

(Photogravure plate from an engraving after the Pastel by
La Tour, in the Louvre)



See volume 2

page 74-75

Frontispiece

for engaging anecdote of
how this portrait came
to be painted by
the great
pastellist

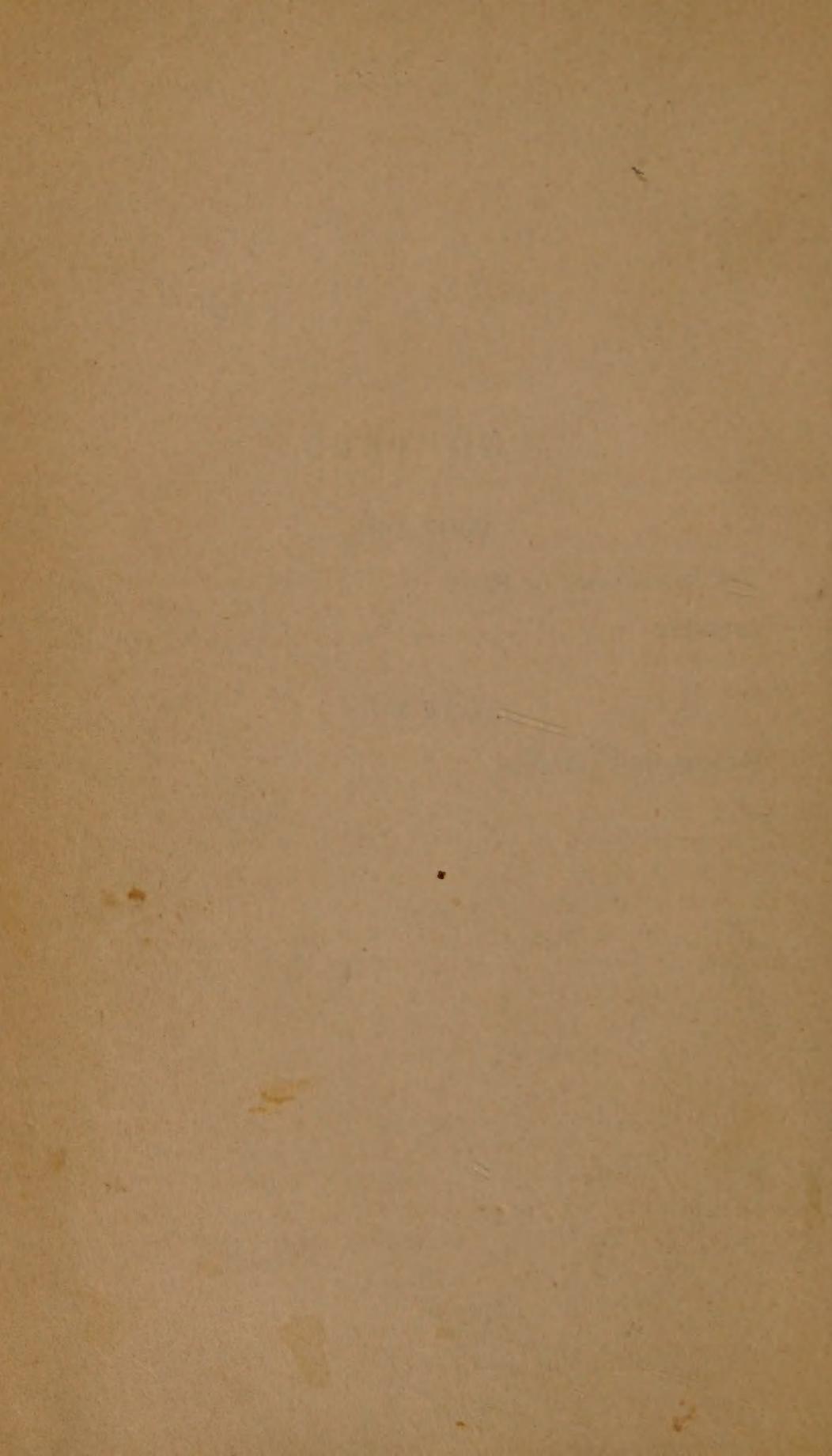
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THE MISTRESSES OF LOUIS XV

BOOK I

THE DEMOISELLES DE NESLE

IN that age of French history, when humanity refined itself to the point of corruption, and discarding violence put off at the same time the virtues of strength; in that time and world, charmed and rendered soft by woman, in which woman, abandoning the passions for the graces of her sex, gave to her conscience as to her sentiments, to her instincts as to her tastes, to the occupations of her heart as well as to the distractions of her thought, a character of lightness, caprice, superficiality and inconstancy such as history had not before encountered in any society; at that time, when everything—love itself—had turned to wit, and when men's souls, in all things, dreaded vows, devotion, engagements and constancy, in France, in the eighteenth century, there was one province, one court, which escaped the contagion, and displayed a profound contrast to the fashions of France and the example of Versailles. Lorraine, the court of Lorraine, was this province and this remarkable court. The Lorrainers, and the Poles who had followed Stanislas, had brought there the simplicity and energy of the old feudal manners, an ardour and sincerity of sentiment and belief elsewhere unknown. Beneath the patriarchate of this prince of another age, some primitive quality gave a particular genius to this little corner of France, a foundation of moral habits which resisted the time and the environment. Passion went there to passion's extreme, and love had the

generous illusion which sees all as eternal: it possessed the continuity of devotion and the devotion of suicide. That other part of woman's heart, piety, existed without faltering and without compromise. It was an almost cloistral devotion, wrought about with practices, hard, and set with sacrifices, which retained in its fashions of adoration something of the terror of sombre Spain; a devotion which ended by living in an easy and almost raptured intimacy with death, in the friendly company of the *gentille mignonne*:—this was the name by which Marie Leczinska called the death's-head which she had in her oratory and which she took^x with her on her journeys.¹ In Lorraine, if the sacrifices to passion were without reservations, the oblations to God were entire; they had that absolute detachment from the world, that contempt, or rather that admirable forgetfulness of human things, which did but put in the heart and mouth of that poor princess, when called to the throne of France, lacking almost a shift, the fear of losing an heavenly for an earthly crown.²

However, the Princess of Lorraine, Marie Leczinska, called to the throne of France and resigning herself to that greatness as to an ordeal, was saved from the gloom and funereal thoughts of such devotion by the good nature and gay qualities of her character, by the high spirit of her excellent constitution, by the laughing energy of her benevolence, the frankness and good-humour of her virtues. Look at her in Nattier's charming portrait: she seems the image of goodness in its human expression, in its happy pleasantness. An expression of health and satisfaction, serenity of the conscience, satisfaction and patience with life, beam on this face lit up with homely mischief, whose smile is, as

¹ Letter of Marie Leczinska, published in the *Memoirs of the Marquis d'Argenson*. Paris, Janet, 1857, vol. iv.

² *Memoirs of the Maréchal Duc de Richelieu*, by Soulavie. Buisson, 1793, vol. iv.

it were, a reflection of those innocent freedoms, of that Gallic spirit with which, from time to time, the Queen amused herself by exciting the hearty laughter of her ladies, in her *holy week*, as the court called it. Unfortunately, all the Queen's qualities were veiled and hidden. Her attractions were shy ones, as her virtues were modest and almost ashamed. The woman, the wife, never revealed herself beneath the Christian, never displayed all the charms of her mind and heart, all the secrets of her amiability, except in the intimacy of a few friends, in a little social circle where she was at ease. She needed, in order to be encouraged to please, to enter into full possession of herself, the tranquillity of a *salon* where age hushed the noise of voices; the company of reason; the intimacy of the old tranquil, almost sleepy, surroundings, such as befitted the maturity of her intelligence and her tastes; semi-somnolent chats by the fireside; small parties of *cavagnol*, restricted by her charities; hard struggles to paint bad pictures; a little music; the sage and cold distractions of a very sensible woman of forty—here only was found the freedom and ease, the happiness also of a Queen whose mind, like her countenance, always resembled that of an old woman.¹ Thus

¹ *Memoirs of the President Hénault*, published by the Baron de Vigan. Deutu, 1855.—*Memoirs of the Maréchal Duc de Richelieu* (by Soulavie). Paris, 1793, vol. viii.—We may add in support of this picture of Marie Leczinska the following unpublished letter, addressed to Cardinal de Fleury, and communicated to us by M. Boutron, which depicts her so well in her habits of submission:—

August 31st, 1726.

“ You do not suspect, monsieur, the pleasure with which I have received your letter, you have done me an infinite one in sending me news of the King's health, as to which it is natural for me to be ever disturbed; I am vexed indeed that the trouble he was at to rise so early has been in vain, as he had so poor a hunt; thank [him] for his kindness to the woman the most attached to him *in the world*, and who feels it most keenly, and whose sole desire is to deserve it; all my impatience is, to go to him the sooner and assure myself, which I hope will not be delayed, as my health continues to improve; I have been much weakened by the heat there has been, but since it has ceased, my strength is returning; I do not send to Fontainebleau until

Louis XV. never knew the woman whom Nattier painted, the woman known to the De Luynes, to Tressan, to the President Hénault. He only saw in Marie Leczinska ■ poor German Princess, terrified and crushed by the presence and the grandeur of a King of France, bringing to their common life none of the resource and initiative of the woman, bringing to their union nothing but obedience, to marriage only duty, ignorant alike of the caresses and of the coquetry of her sex, trembling and faltering in her *rôle* of Queen, like some escaped nun lost in Versailles, grouping round her all the old heads at court, collecting dulness in that corner of the palace, full

Monday, ■ we have *agreed*, for fear of being inconvenient to the King. If I obeyed my inclination, you would see more frequent couriers ; I am mighty pleased at that you tell me of my *entresol*, you know my *liking to be alone*, thus you may judge from that it will not displease me. You are right to say that *like things* are not done at my court as at that of the King, whereas they do naught but yawn at *Fontainebleau*, at Versailles they do naught but sleep ; as for me, in my particular case, I make it an occupation both by day and night, feeling much *ennui*, that does not displease my ladies whom you know to be mighty *sluggards*. In the matter of whom, I must tell you that I have done as I had told you, which was, as they were all the day with me, to give them permission to be clad more conveniently, and for those who are not ladies of the palace, they were ordered to be in *full dress*. As it was reported to me from many quarters that this caused pain to the others, and that several even, who have remained in Paris, held some discussion upon it, I resolved to-day, and have even so told the Maréchale, that as I am now well, and go out to-morrow to the Chapel, that they all do put on *full dress*. I hope that you will approve this, all the more since, effectively, there are but few others here, besides my ladies, and it is pretended that it is this very reason which prevents their coming.

I should wish to know also the King's intentions, upon my *arrangements* and what ladies will follow me on my going to Fontainebleau ; lying at *Petitbourg*, that makes a sort of stage ; in fine, you will give me pleasure by sending me your *counsel in all things*, and, what I am the most sensitive to, is that you be convinced of my perfect esteem for you.

From VERSAILLES.

MARIE.

I should have written sooner upon the discontent of the *ladies*, but I have been too weak ; I think you will not disapprove what I have done, all the more in that, being well at present, they have no need to be so assiduous. I doubt not but that you will be troubled to read my letter, my hand being still somewhat tremulous.

of the murmur of broken voices, where no young things lived, where nothing live spoke to the King's thirty years.

A singular man, this young husband, this young sovereign, whom nothing interested, nothing amused, nothing held, and whose mind the old Cardinal de Fleury dragged in vain from one taste to another, from the cultivation of lettuces to the Maréchal d'Estrées' collection of antiques, from his labours in the tower¹ to the minutiae of etiquette, and from the tower to tapestry,² without being able to attach his soul to anything, without being able to give an employment to his time, a master or companion to his thought³ Imagine a King of France, inheritor of the Regency, frozen and enveloped in the shadows of an Escurial: a young man in the flower of his life and the dawn of his reign, devoured with weariness, worn and aged already with disgust, satiated with glory before he had tasted it, weary of power before he had enjoyed it; then, in the midst of all these lassitudes of the heart, torn and shaken by religious terrors, fears of Hell, fears of death, which were amply confessed in his alarmed and tremulous speech, and which plunged him, for whole days, in a black melancholy, from which only the brutal pleasures of the chase or a drinking-bout could arouse him. Without friendships, without preferences, without ardour, without passion, indifferent to the State, and showing no sign of the consciousness of his royalty, save in a jealousy of his good pleasure, in the list of the guests to his supper-parties,⁴ Louis XV. appeared as a big and gloomy child, shrinking from the great men as from the great things of his time,⁵ and living, remote from his reign, in the smallest apartments in his palace, and in the most miserable diversions for a Prince; an intelligent child, but pitiless, whose

¹ *Memoirs of the Duc de Luynes*, published by E. Soulié and Dussieux. Paris, Firmin-Didot, 1860, vol. ii.

² *Ibid.* vol. iii.

³ *Memoirs of the Maréchal Duc de Richelieu.* 1793, vol. vi.

⁴ *Ibid.* vol. v.

⁵ *Ibid.*

natural temper, whose clever French good sense was sarcastic, dry and malicious, as though it had been his resentment and revenge for the discomfort his humours¹ gave him. Above all, there was in him a vague aspiration after pleasure, imperious physical needs, whose violence recalled the first Bourbons, a sentiment of emptiness, of solitude, a great embarrassment of the will and of his freedom, the desire, the appeal, the anxious expectation of the domination of some woman, passionate or vivacious, tender or witty.

He asked, without, perhaps, admitting it to himself, for a *liaison* which should drag him from the depths of his depression, from the monotony of his cares, the indolence of his caprices ; which should occupy his thoughts, arouse and enliven his life, bringing him the excitement of passion or the stimulus of gaiety, filling and caressing, as he had been a sick man, his spirit and his heart. To forget his kingly personality, to be delivered from himself, that was what Louis XV. asked of adultery ; that was what he was fated to seek in it all his life.

It was all that which alienated the King from the Queen, and drove him to pass his nights in the society of young people, of the Duc de La Trémouille, the Duc de Gesvres; and of a few young and gay women, the band which Mademoiselle de Charolois brought and led. One might have thought one saw a *gamin*, some truant urchin almost, in this princess of the house of Condé, who was to keep all her life the pretty face she had at sixteen, and those vivacious eyes which pierced through the mask, in this amiable *enfant terrible*, the like of whom has always been found amid the splendours or the sorrows of Versailles, to derange its etiquette, or deride its glory.

Wit, verses, songs and sallies, Mademoiselle de Charolois made use of all her gifts and all her impudence, with a lad's freedom, in order to dispel the cold seriousness of a court, to summon to it amusement and familiarity, to procure

¹ *Memoirs of the Comte de Maurepas.* Paris, Buisson, 1792, vol. iii.

diversions, animate the suppers, and to scatter, like a charming and shameless Folly, the extravagances, refrains and imbroglios of carnival around the throne and beside the affairs of State. Even better fitted to seduce than to please, uniting all kinds of characters, the sprightliness of the Mortemarts with the haughtiness of the Condés, carrying off the audacities and improprieties of her grace with a certain air of the princess which spoiled nothing and redeemed almost everything, capricious, fantastic and frivolous to excess, tormented by black humours which she issued from with a jest, a hardy sally, some page's trick, at no pains to conceal the most incongruous of her humours,¹ Mademoiselle de Charolois from these very contradictions and inconstancies was likely to surprise a young husband weary of the immovable serenity of his wife. It was in vain, however, that she openly flaunted ■ passion for the young King, in vain that she roughly awoke his senses by a thousand coquettresses, a thousand assaults : the King's timidity eluded these advances which amused and alarmed, but did not tempt his heart ; that young monarch's heart was still so full of the aged Fleury's terrifying tales of the women of the Regency.

From the society of Mademoiselle de Charolois, Louis XV. passed to that of the Comtesse de Toulouse. The latter was a beautiful, buxom creature, with dark brown eyes, an assured and dignified gaze, a gentle, peaceful smile, whose face, which was not rouged, and whose whole person, showed a noble tranquillity and the amiable quietude of an air finely devout.² The *salon*, the society of Madame de Toulouse, was the little court of Rambouillet, a mundane refuge remote from the brutal gallantry of the Regency, a reflection and survival of the great society of Louis XIV. Here, the former virtues of the world, fair customs, respect for women, reticence of tone, the tradition of social habits

¹ *Vie Privée de Louis XV.* Londres, Peter Lyton, 1785, vol. i.—*Memoirs of the Maréchal Duc de Richelieu.* Vol. iv.

² *Memoirs of the Marquis d'Argenson.* Janet, 1857, vol. ii.

lived on still in an easy enjoyment, in the animated gaiety of a youthful company, in the happy peace and epicurean softness of a little devout world, noiselessly enjoying life. Mademoiselle de Charolois herself surrendered to the genius of the place when she entered the house of Madame de Toulouse ; there she was no more than a laughing princess, an elf bringing the life of delicate pleasures and the pastimes of her years into this court of harmony, fine shades, murmurs, discreet sounds, indolent gallantries, over which there still hung a shadow of grandeur and magnificence which was met with nowhere but there. Involuntarily the young monarch compared with this court—a very Watteau abbey—the dead and sombre court of the Queen of France ; and his still youthful love, that love which trembled and awoke amid the trouble of his religious scruples, let itself gradually go before the almost mystical seduction of this fair and puissant Puritan, who was touched and troubled by the bowed homage and platonic admiration of her King —the handsomest man in his kingdom.

In the midst of these distractions, these temptations, which were as yet no more to the King than emotions, and as they had been games, the King's fancy for the Queen, that fancy which was so alert in the early days of their union, went on diminishing and disappearing with time, as is the way with every physical passion. Their domestic relations had always worn a serious hue ; they now were characterised by tedium and restraint. The absence of self-abandonment, the lack of effusion and reciprocal unbending, which the valets had remarked in the most intimate interviews between the King and Queen, augmented daily. The King's coldness became intensified. The Queen wept and concealed her tears ; and the court was delighted to see the King with this wife *without charm and without coquetry*, who was so little capable of retaining her husband and so little likely to interfere with his intrigues. Indeed, Marie Leczinska was not one of those

women who struggle and win back their happiness by the use of every seduction marriage allows: she would not retain her husband except by the duty of giving heirs to the Crown; and without seeking to recall a heart which was escaping her, she detached herself, without a murmur, from the King's love. She shut herself up and took refuge in her sorrow; she armed herself with patience; she wooed old age as it were with coquetry, and grew old with a gay heart; she stripped her dress of all a young woman's adornments;¹ she surrounded herself with the severe society of Mesdames de Ruppelmonde, D'Amiens, De Luynes, and buried herself in spiritual reading. In this household where alienation was beginning, mere nothings, the smallest and most pardonable fantasies sufficed to excite opposition and widen the breach. The Queen exasperated the nerves of the sensitive King by a thousand puerilities, by her fears, by her need of being lulled and sent to sleep by storytelling, and of having always a woman at her call; by a hundred starts and excursions during the night in her chamber, in search of her lap-dog. Or else the chilly Princess had thrown a mattress over her, which suffocated the King, and drove him from his wife's bed. Then, after the travail of so many *accouchements*, after having borne seven children to the King, there had come to the Queen a weariness, almost a disgust, with those pleasures which the King's temperament solicited indefatigably. "What, what!" said the Princess of Lorraine—"What, what! always big! always lying-in! . . .²

The wife cried for grace and mercy in the mother's name. Perhaps, to this natural repugnance other counsels were also joined; whispered suggestions, words fallen in the shadow in the depths of the Queen's Christian soul, the inspiration of strange scruples as to the respect due to the sanctity of the sacrament, and the finger of a con-

¹ *Le Glaneur Historique et Morel.* Juin, 1738.

² *Memoirs of the Marquis d'Argenson.* Paris, Janet, 1857, vol. i.

fessor pointing to the angels who guard the marriage bed purified by continence.¹

The court, from the ante-chamber to the stairs, the young men and women, the politicians, the upper servants, intrigue and ambition, all the passions of a world which gets up and goes to bed for interest, watched the chilliness of the consorts through the doors, and, calculating the rupture of the last links between the King and Queen, prayed earnestly for the advent of a mistress who should bring about a revolution at Versailles, change the current of favour and renovate the Government. All who were hostile to the Cardinal de Fleury, all those whom the aged minister's economy thwarted, all who were condemned to obscurity by the civilian policy of the statesman of peace, the greed of the valets, who were restrained and stinted, as well as the impatience of the men with projects, barred in their career and their future, without a theatre, without a battlefield on which to exert their imagination or tempt fortune—all saluted the King's adultery with their hopes. The temptations and intrigues of gallantry had the complicity and the aid of those youthful striplings, the Gesvres, the D'Épernons, the Richelieus. Humiliated by the ill success of their conspiracy of the *Marmousets*, inflamed and worked upon by the grievances of which the disgraced minister Chauvelin undertook the conduct and secret command, they filled the King's mind with mockeries, and with all the arms of youth, ridicule and agreeable irony, laxity of manners and the example of pleasure, they attacked the lessons and authority of the aged priest in his pupil's mind. The King's seduction by a woman would favour agitation, the fury of great affairs, the turbulent energy of that semi-genius, the Maréchal de Belle-Isle, who saw only there, in the support of a mistress flattered to be associated in his glory, the realisation of plans which at once alarmed the timidity both of Fleury and of the young King. Then there was the establishment of Tencin

¹ *Memoirs of the Duc de Richelieu.* 1793, vol. iv.

with his sister,—Tencin, whose marked and hidden rôle was already so large, so important, who saw at the end of a *liaison*, at the end of an affair of the heart, the management of the King's will, the guidance of his conduct, the opportunity of approaching his person and his power; all the results of a frailty which allows and seems to legitimatise all men's fortunes. So many people's wishes being concerned, they were favoured by the women who plumed themselves on their piety and ultramontanism, Madame d'Armagnac, Madame de Villars, Madame de Gontaut, Madame de Saint Florentin, Madame de Mazarin; by the zealous Molinists, and again by the house of Noailles, quite prepared for Tencin's elevation, and hating Chauvelin, whose superiority they envied and dreaded, in the event of his obtaining the Cardinal's Succession.

Finally, at the bottom of the court, yet in close proximity to the King, another influence, hidden as yet, but already powerful, worked and watched. The valets of the chamber, checked and maintained in a secondary part by the virtue of Louis XV., with no other functions than their domestic duties in a court where the King belonged to his wife alone, were expecting from a dissipated and gallant court, from a King who had put off the marital yoke and fallen at the mercy of their discretion, at the need of their complacence, the full profits of their situation.

Singular to relate, these intentions, secretly directed in every serious mind to the destruction of the ministry and the minister, met with, I will not say the support, but almost the acquiescence of the Cardinal, whose only condition was that he should be consulted in the choice, and assured of the neutrality of the person chosen. The Cardinal had not forgotten old grievances against the Queen; he still remembered with bitterness Marie Leczinska's attempt to restore M. le Duc to the King's favour, her gratitude to the men who had set her upon the throne,¹ and he saw in a mistress a preservative and

¹ *Memoirs of the Maréchal Duc de Richelieu.* Vol. iv.

guarantee against a return of the Queen's influence, if she should take advantage of a devout moment to win back her husband. It was thus that everyone, even those who were threatened by the conspiracy, conspired for the King's infidelity. It was not Versailles alone, it was—and this has not been said before—his very people which surrounded the young King with its complicity, smiled on him, encouraged him, as though, habituated by the Bourbon to the fair glory of gallantry, France could not comprehend a sovereign without a Gabrielle, as if, in the amours of its masters, it found a satisfaction and flattery of its national pride!

Daily the rumour and promise of the good tidings surged up from all these hopes and passions, from this universal expectation, eager to compromise the King, and resolved to prepare and precipitate his amours by announcing them beforehand, the court pronounced the names of the Comtesse de Toulouse, of Mademoiselle de Charolois. Suppositions ran and halted on this side and on that, even upon the Queen's ladies, who were in such close contact with the King's desires, and certain of whom had the manners and the facility of the age. Had not the saintly Queen been forced to submit to that maid-of-honour, the Maréchale de Boufflers, who had been so advertised and shown so bold a front to rumour; to that maid-of-honour, Madame de Mailly, to whom a *liaison* with M. de Puysieux had been attributed? And was there not, again, amongst the twelve ladies of her palace, the open gallantry of Madame de Nesle and Dumesnil,¹ the amours of Madame de Gontaut, who lost, perhaps, through a grudge of the Duc de Gesvres, the chance of being the King's mistress, and the dubious reputations of the Maréchale de Villars, the Duchesses de Tallard, De Béthune, D'Épernon, the ladies D'Egmont, De Chalais, De Mérode, who all merited the honour of suspicion and of the court's envy.²

¹ *Memoirs of the Marquis d'Argenson.* Vol. ii.

² *Memoirs of the Duc de Richelieu.* Vol. iii.

Madame de Prie alone was, by common consent, absolutely exonerated from these suspicions. The King's antipathy for her was known, his repugnance even to meeting her at the Queen's.¹ Soon there was vague talk of a toast of the young sovereign's; and those who knew, the young courtiers, who were most in the King's intimacy, and the habit of his society, discussed with bated breath a supper at La Muette, when the King, after having drunk to the health of the Unknown Fair, had broken his glass, and invited his table, and that over which the Duc de Retz presided, to do likewise. Great had been the curiosity as to the identity of the *Unknown*; the voices of the two tables had been divided between Madame la Duchesse, the younger, Mademoiselle de Beaujolais and Madame de Lauraguais, the grand-daughter of Lassay and daughter-in-law of M. le Duc de Villars-Branca. But the King had been silent and kept his secret.² The public was making a great stir round the name of Madame Portail, wife of the first president; but Versailles knew that her malice, her folly and the assertive attractions of her whole person had alarmed the King, who had caused M. de Lugeac to replace him at the rendezvous. They mentioned also a Madame d'Ancezane and others; but the court was aware that none of these women, who had been brought to the King to beguile his senses and distract him from the Queen's coldness, was calculated to touch his heart. None was fit to extend her rôle beyond a caprice, to prolong his dream beyond the moment of waking.

A minister was a trifle more profound than everybody else. In his morning rides in the Bois de Boulogne, he had remarked the recent traces of carriage-wheels, going across the closed avenues of the Barrière, from Madrid, the residence of Mademoiselle de Charolois, to La Muette.³ But his suppositions went astray amongst all the women

¹ *Memoirs of the Duc de Richelieu.* Vol. iii.

² *Memoirs of the Comte de Maurepas.*

³ *Ibid.*

of Mademoiselle de Charolois' society ; and the *Unknown* remained as unknown to the minister as to the courtiers, some of whom, however, had observed that it was impossible to pronounce the name of Madame de Mailly before the King without his blushing.¹ In the midst of all this mystery, the King, his melancholy laid aside, rejuvenated, with the air of a man glad to be alive, seized on a sudden with a thirst for pleasure and eager for diversions, went abroad and dissipated the energy of a happy fever on every side ; bestirring himself and expanding, he divided the disposition of his days between Rambouillet, where the Comtesse de Toulouse resided, Bagatelle, the residence of the Maréchale d'Estrées, Madrid, where Mademoiselle de Charolois was living,—pleasant retreats, charming palaces, little courts of gallantry, of provoking tenderness and pretty wit, which seemed to mark the King's road with the stages and enchanted stations of a French Decameron. One day it was Paris and the Bal de l'Opera which the young King astonished by his presence, his vivacity and a childish gaiety ; or again, indefatigable, flaming forth with a spirit which the court did not recognise in him, he threw himself into supper parties whose noisy merriment he led and prolonged far into the night. Thence, still animated, he would repair to the Queen, who made a display of the repugnance and horror she felt at the intoxication of champagne and its aroma, and finished by spinning out her prayers until the King had fallen asleep. A night arrived at last which the whole court foresaw and was awaiting. Bachelier, the King's valet de chambre, having been to inform the Queen that the King was about to visit her, the Queen replied that she deeply regretted she was unable to receive His Majesty. To two fresh requests of the King, Bachelier returned with the same answer ; and from the King's anger and indignation, which the valet de chambre participated and inflamed, the issue desired of Bachelier ensued ; the King declared that henceforth he would exact

¹ *Memoirs of the Marquis d'Argenson.* Vol. ii.

no further duty from the Queen. The following day the Cabal grew bold and played their last stake ; as Madame de Mailly was gliding stealthily to the small apartments to pass the night there, Bachelier, who was escorting her, opening her hood, as if by inadvertence, allowed her to be seen by two ladies.¹ And on the occasion of a journey to Compiègne (1738) postponed for three days on account of Madame de Mailly's service with the Queen,² Bachelier's *protégé* became, if not the declared, at least the public mistress of the King.

With this King, brought up by the Cardinal in a remote distrust of all that was great at the court, and so disposed by his character and education to mean and familiar influences, Bachelier, the valet de chambre, was a big and important personage. Wrapped up in his elderly and prosperous egoism, oblivious of the humble origin of his fortune, the horse of the Duc de La Rochefoucauld which his father, the smith, had shod,³ fond of pleasure and kept in good humour by his income of fifty thousand livres, by his fine property of La Celle, which had been honoured by a visit from the King, by the love of a most agreeable person, Mademoiselle la Traverse, Baron's daughter ; established in the intimate favour of the King whom he knew how to amuse with the scandalous stories and the whole *soltisier* of Paris, which was furnished him by his mistress, regaling him with the first edition of the stories and witticisms of Maurepas, through his relations with the Petitpas and the Rivaudais, the purveyors of Maurepas' anecdotes, or again with the confidences of Sallé, son of La Desmarest and clerk of the ministry, Bachelier was perhaps the happiest and most solidly established man in France. He had, moreover, the luck to find as his assistant, a second self, a valet whom he had caused to

¹ *Memoirs of the Duc de Richelieu.* Vol. v.

² The Queen is reported to have said to Madame de Mailly, when she requested permission to go to Compiègne : *You are the mistress.* (*Historical Journal of Barbier.* Vol. ii.)

³ *Memoirs of the Duc de Richelieu.* Vol. v.

be appointed *garçon bleu* of the chamber, and who, when replacing him on his short absences, dilated to the King only upon Bachelier's devotion, then, his service finished and his part conscientiously played, consigned himself once more to the orders of the seigneur of La Celle.

Beyond this, Bachelier was intelligent and adroit. He had the instinct, the tact of influence, foreknowledge of credits on the wane, detachment from individuals, that science of double dealing and regard for the future which, after having led him to abandon Chauvelin, in order to give himself entirely to the Cardinal, made him keep up secret relations with the exiled Chancellor at Bourges,¹ in addition, playing the good-natured man to the life, without being puffed up or surrounding himself with airs of pride or importance, but employing smoothness and unction, caressing and complacent to the hopes of all, having a smile for the plans of Belle-Isle, finding a tear for the sorrows of the Queen, whom he flattered with a hope of the King's return, Bachelier, the true monarch of the little apartments, the only man, perhaps, in whom Louis XV. had absolute confidence, seemed to lay claim to nothing at court beyond the friendship of his master, with whom he was almost always closeted. He displayed only a desire for the good of all, had only the words of the honest man, almost of the citizen, in his mouth and seemed to have no other aim than to reconcile popular opinion with his place, and prejudices with his service.² It was thus that Bachelier appeared.³ What he desired, even more keenly than the court desired it, was a settled intrigue, it was a mistress under his thumb in the King's bed, a mistress suitable in rank and name, a woman—if that were possible—without beauty, without ambition, capable of the devotion of a disinterested passion for the King and of the devotion of an answering

¹ *Historical Journal of Louis XV.*, by Barbier. 1854, vol. ii.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Memoirs of the Marquis d'Argenson.* Janet, 1857, vol. ii.

gratitude towards the instruments of her elevation. Now all these wished-for qualities were combined in the woman whose hood he had lifted, in the Unknown to whom the King had drunk.

Madame de Mailly in 1737 was a woman of thirty, whose fine eyes, black to the point of hardness, retained in her most melting and passionate moments only a sufficient gleam of boldness to encourage the timidities of love. All, in her physiognomy, in the thin oval of her dark face had that irritating and sensual charm which appeals to young men. It was one of those provocative beauties, crimson hued, the eyebrows heavy, with a sheen that seems like a ray from the setting sun ; one of those women of whom the painters of the Regency have left us the type in all their female portraits, with gauze on their breasts and a star on their forehead ; women who, with cheeks on fire and blood astir, eyes large and lustrous as the eyes of Juno, with bold carriage and in free toilettes, step forward out of the past with the proud and insolent graces of the divinities of some Bacchanalia.¹ Add that Madame de Mailly was inimitable in the arrangement of her beauty, in displaying it to its full advantage. No woman at the court knew how to dress as she did, nor how to adapt the fashions so well to her appearance, nor to arrange with a happier hand the demi-veils which lend the piquancy of modesty to those mythological *déshabillés*.

This taste, this care and cult of the toilette, went with Madame de Mailly even by night. She never went to bed without being coiffed and adorned with all her diamonds. It was her greatest coquetry, and her seductive hour was in the morning, at Choisy, when, in her bed, with her fine hair dishevelled by sleep strewed on

¹ *Mélanges Historiques*, by M. B——. Jourdain, vol. ii. We have no knowledge of the portrait of Madame de Mailly by Latour of which M. de Luynes speaks in this sentence of his Memoirs (vol. iii.) :—“ Madame de Mailly is now being painted in pastel by a certain Latour. Madame de Mailly said this morning that he was the sixteenth painter who had done her portrait.”

her pillow, covered with the sheen of her diamonds, she gave audience to her tradesmen, her "kittens," as she called them. Thus, in the midst of her ornaments, of the two or three millions of jewels which Lemagnau flashed before her eyes, with the richest stuffs spread out before her and piled at the foot of the bed, she recalled those *levers de femme* of the Venetian school, amid the unravelment of brocades and the sheen of precious stones, in the light of a Temptation which pours its coffers and its caskets, all the treasures of fashion, at the feet of the sleeper who awakes.¹

The face of Madame de Mailly told the whole woman. Ardent, passionate, all pride and happiness in having made, in her last years of love, the conquest of that King of France, who was as handsome as Love himself, she must needs prove ready and resolved to all the advances, all the facilities, even to those enterprises and violences of seduction of which the shameful details have been revealed by Soulavie. But she also proved susceptible of the utmost attachment and devotion, and capable of all the sacrifices which are inspired in a woman of that age and character by a *liaison* with a young man. All contrasts, and concealing beneath her bacchanal air, her harsh voice, the most tender and gentle qualities of a loving heart, the sentimental graces and emotions of a la Vallière, Madame de Mailly was a charming and facile mistress, who was able to afford the King additional pleasure by her little quips and chatter, her fund of gaiety, to which her happiness lent wit and liveliness, a childish sauciness and naïveté,² combined with a man's frankness. She was acceptable to the court, owing to her remoteness from intrigues and the knowledge of affairs, a rare virtue in a mistress; from the humility,

¹ *Memoirs of the Duc de Luynes.* Firmin-Didot, 1860, vol. iii.

² Recall the anecdote related by Barbier, vol. ii., with regard to the privilege of the *Mercure galant* asked for by Fuzelier, and which Madame de Mailly understood as the privilege of *Mercury*, and which she went for in all good faith to the surgeon La Peyronie.

and a sort of gratitude, which she brought to her adoration of the King, from that easiness of disposition which enabled her to enter into all the friendships, almost into all the companionships of the King. From her rank and title, Madame de Mailly derived no sort of pride or insolence, unless it were a disdain of money and a contempt for the profits of her position.¹ With age, she had acquired every accomplishment, sociability, worldly charity, amiability, an equable temper, and the youth which time had taken from her she recovered in the champagne of the little supper-parties, seeking from wine—it is a slander of history²—the equivalent of her youthful humour and her early years; and the secret of amusing a King who was not always to be amused.

And now, with Madame de Mailly, the little apartments grow animated, gay to the point of licence. Noise, merriment, an ever gayer and livelier clash of glasses, madder nights! In these closets, which lead by a secret door into the King's chamber, and have no communication with the rest of the Château except for the service, a sequestered temple where art exhausted her enchantments, pleasure unbridles herself and is at her ease. It is the mysterious sanctuary, the magic palace hidden in Versailles, where the allegories of the time point out to you *Sophi*, the King, and *Rétima*, Madame de Mailly, celebrating nocturnal fêtes to the honour of Bacchus and Venus, amid a sacred throng of amiable women and gallant courtiers. Everything is rare and exquisite in these royal debauches which succeed to the fatigues of the chase:³ the wines are of the oldest and finest; the table is succulent, all spices and delicacies, laden with the divine dishes of Moutier, the

¹ We know of the indignation and anger to which Madame de Mailly gave vent, in the matter of the fur which she had commissioned M. de la Chétardie to buy for her in Russia and which was sent to her as a gift by the Empress, owing to a remark of Louis XV., who was pleased to reproach her jokingly with receiving presents from foreign Powers.

² *Mélanges Historiques de M. de B*—. Jourdain, 1807, vol. ii.

³ *Ibid.*

former cook of the Duc de Nevers, the supreme *chef* of the Regency, whom the Regent immortalised in his songs ; it is resplendent with the salads arranged by Mademoiselle de Charolois, and relieves of truffles prepared before the King's eyes.¹ Sometimes even—rare and august kitchen ! —it is honoured by ragouts that the King himself has been pleased to cook, in silver saucpans, with the Prince de Dombes for his first assistant. And *fête* follows *fête* : one day it is the lesser festival, when Sévagi, Télinde, and Fatmé (the Comte and Comtesse of Toulouse and Mademoiselle de Charolois) restrain the orgy and give it a mundane tone and an air of decency ; on another, the greater mysteries, when the King's mistress assists alone, enfranchise the debauch, and flinging the celebrants into the last excesses of intoxication, gather them up at break of day and bear them to their bed.²

It resulted, however, that these *fêtes*, of the frankest voluptuousness, instead of settling the King, troubled and upset him. The violent, but for so long constant, temperament, the husband who had naïvely disappointed so many advances, remarking that he found no woman lovelier than his wife, came at last through this life of suppers, of unbridled amusements and incontrollable delights, to find in love, not so much its own satisfaction as pleasure's stings. The lover in Louis XV. was effaced, the libertine was set up. A weariness came over him for this *liaison*, which the Duc de Luynes dates from 1733, and to which his senses had grown accustomed. He was tired of a mistress who was amiable indeed, but ever in the same way, and whose very charms had the humble, equable, and monotonous character of submission, which had irritated him in his wife. His self-esteem also prompted him to be unfaithful, and it was, as it were, a personal humiliation, when he heard foreigners, the court, the friends as well as the enemies of his mistress, even the husband whose wife he

¹ *Memoirs of the Duc de Luynes.* Vol. ii.

² *Vie Privée de Louis XV.* Londres, Peter Lyton, vol. ii.

had taken, express surprise at his passion for a woman past her youth, and very inferior in beauty to a thousand others at Versailles. Restored to coolness by his vanity, he felt weak and ashamed before the general, almost public refrain, which gained in volume daily, which was bruited in the songs in vogue, introduced itself even into the jests of the courtiers, and finished by compelling him to cry one night through the chimney-piece to Flavacourt: "Will you hold your tongue!" Finally, to this kingly busybody, with his curiosity about petty matters, his love of entering into the domestic and family details of those who approached him, the disagreeables which ensued to Madame de Mailly from her family, and of which he felt the effects, formed a last cause of coldness and estrangement.

The De Maillys were an old and illustrious family of soldiers. They mounted back, in the middle of the eleventh century, to Anselm de Mailly, guardian of the Comte de Flandres and governor of his States, slain at the siege of Lille: a goodly death, which seemed an appanage of that noble race, the last of whom to die had perished in 1668, at the age of thirty-six, at the siege of Philisbourg. Then, under the Regency, one had seen the inheritor of the great name lost in libertinage and engulfed in scandal, and all that was left of the valiant family which wrote proudly beneath the three scutcheons of its hotel gates: *Hoque qui Vondra.*¹

The last descendant, the third Louis de Nesle, who is only remarkable in history for having astonished the Czar, at the time of his visit to Paris, by the variety of his costumes,²—Louis de Nesle had, with his wife, flaunted openly all those disorders and degradations which seem to drag a glorious family in the mud in which worn-out races and great exhausted rivers are lost and finish. . . . Madame de la Porte-Mazarin, dying in 1739, had left a

¹ *Memoirs of the Duc de Richelieu.* Vol. iv.

² *Memoirs of the Marquis d'Argenson.* Vol. i.

reputation for gallantry which was a byword; and we hear of the little tricks played on her by the Queen, who loved her well, when she kept her by her side and made her miss some *fête* or rendezvous, by readings in the *Imitation of Jesus Christ*. The Marquis de Nesle, the father of all those Desmoiselles de Nesle,¹ who were loved by Louis XV., was a grand seigneur who carried his familiarity with comedians to the point of becoming their boon companion. It is of him that the letter attributed by the wags to the actress De Seine, his mistress, speaks in these terms: ". . . It was my intention to send M. le Duc de Gesvres, a marquis, the flower of the heroes of the Kingdom, whom the scruples of a delicate conscience hinder from going to the war, and who hid himself of old from his enemies, lest his valour should tempt him to break God's fifth commandment; but his creditors only give him liberty to go abroad of Sundays."² . . . And the letter of Mademoiselle de Seine told the truth, at least as to the creditors. The Marquis, who was in possession of an income of 250,000 livres in 1726, saw his personal property and a portion of his real property

¹ The five sisters, born of the marriage (2nd April 1709) of Louis de Mailly with Armande Félice de la Porte-Mazarin, daughter of Paul Jules de la Porte-Mazarin, Duc de Rethel-Mazarin, who died on 12th October 1729, were:—

(1) Louise-Julie de Mailly-Nesle, born 16th March 1710, married 31st May 1736 to Louis-Alexandre, Comte de Mailly and Seigneur de Rubempré, her cousin-german, died 5th March 1751.

(2) Pauline-Félicité de Mailly-Nesle, known before her marriage as *Mademoiselle de Nesle*, born in August 1712, married on 28th September 1739 to Jean-Baptiste Félix Hubert, Marquis de Vintimille, died 10th September 1741.

(3) Diane-Adélaïde de Mailly-Nesle, known as *Mademoiselle de Montcaravelle*, born in 1714, married to Louis, Duc de Brancas, called Duc de Lauraguais, died 30th November 1769.

(4) Hortense-Félicité de Mailly-Nesle, known as *Mademoiselle de Mailly*, born 11th February 1715, married 21st January 1739 to François-Marie de Fouilleuse, Marquis de Flavacourt, living in 1792.

(5) Marie-Anne de Mailly-Nesle, born in October 1717, married 19th June 1734 to Jean-Louis, Marquis de la Tournelle, created Duchesse de Châteauroux ■ March 1744, died 28th December 1744.

² *Historical Journal of the Reign of Louis XV.*, by Barbier. Vol. ii.

seized, at the instance of Philippe Doremus, a citizen of Paris. Shortly afterwards, the income of 70,000 livres which remained from his debts was appropriated ; his creditors took possession of the totality of his property, whether free or entailed.¹ Driven to bay, the Marquis de Nesle wrestled with poverty and desperate expedients, amid the jeers of the public and such personal notices as this, which announced one day : "M. le Marquis de Nesle has at last reached the point of being unable to live at the hostelry, or, to put it in a nutshell, his credit being absolutely exhausted, he has been obliged to boil his pot at home, and has consequently bought some kitchen utensils." Cynical, witty, turning a brave face to scandal, insolent in his ruin, respecting only his daughters and the King, from whom he received a pension of 24,000 livres, he issued a memorial in which, abusing his judges and insulting his reporter Maboul, he spoke with haughtiness of his *wretched suit against his wretched creditors.*² This brought the King a thousand worries. He was caught between the Cardinal, who asked for M. de Nesle's exile, and Madame de Mailly, who, with the heart of a woman and a daughter, begged and wept for her father, and wore out the royal decision with her prayers and solicitations. Then there were more prayers and solicitations that M. de Nesle should not be sent to Evreux, but to Caen, which he preferred as a residence ; when the King had granted this, he had the further annoyance of seeing his mercy compromised by the solemn entry of the Marquis de Nesle into the town, at the head of his whole household : four pages, a master of the horse, and Mademoiselle de Seine. To add to the King's embarrassment, to such a father add the husband, M. de Mailly, who, having got

¹ Memorial drawn up by Louis de Mailly, Marquis de Nesle, Chevalier des Ordres du Roy, petitioner, against the Syndics and directors of his alleged creditors, respondents.—Memorial of the Syndics and directors of the creditors of the Marquis de Nesle, against the Marquis de Nesle, 1752.

² *Memoirs of the Marquis d'Argenson.* Vol. i.

rid of his wife and his establishment, which was known as the "house of thirst and hunger," sprang boldly and buoyantly from his hackney coach into the smartest of equipages, showed himself everywhere, interfered in everything, and succeeded in getting arrested as a freemason.¹

Whilst these embarrassments caused by the family were gradually separating the King from Madame de Mailly, she, herself, by her jealousy, sulkiness, puerilities, the thousand exigences of an anxious heart, seemed to be deliberately trying to alienate him. She suddenly developed an unaccommodating character, with sudden whims, imperious caprices, childish attacks of obstinacy. She did not allow the King to make a single visit to Choisy, even though he were unaccompanied by women, during the weeks when she was in attendance on the Queen, without threatening to desert the Queen, her duties, and her charge, in order to appear at the Château suddenly and surprise him. There were fresh quarrels every day, which irritated the King. Although she was fond of play, she refused in order to prevent the King from playing. Dressed and ready to go abroad, she declined to follow his suite, and insisted on retaining the persons whom the King had named. She was obstinately set on adopting the susceptible airs of a little girl. One day when the King had sat down to supper at Choisy, nothing could induce her to come to the table, and she supped at a small table in another room. Or, again, grumbling at her luck at cards, she left the King's table, and wished to have a *cavagnol* sent from Paris, in order that she might play without the King, in her own room. To these whimsies fits of impatience succeeded. If the King were slow in answering her, she flung this phrase at him: "If a woman were to take so long over her *accouchement*, she would die in labour!" Tortured with jealousy, she ceaselessly tormented and persecuted the King with it. Did she suspect him of having received an impression from some

¹ *Memoirs of the Duc de Luynes.* Vol. iii.

other woman, she gave him no peace until she had extracted an uncomplimentary remark from him upon her face or toilette. She watched the King everywhere, spent her life in following him, mounted guard round the closets, to see that no woman should sup with the King without her presence: so occupied by this espionage, so absorbed in this pursuit of the King, that she ceased to put in an appearance before the Queen of evenings, the latter viewing the anguish of her passion charitably, and disarmed by her agitation, her fever and her tears.¹

At this time there lived between the four walls of Port Royal, in the peace and seclusion of a convent, in a tranquil world of austere or tender, pious or romantic ideas, a young girl whose little head cherished enormous ambitions, no vague and impatient aspiration, but the deliberate project and meditated plan of the most audacious dream. Her imagination soared fearlessly to the *rôle* of Sovereign of France, and coldly devised the retreat of Fleury, the overthrow of the ministry, the subjection of the King's heart and of the court. One might say that all the hardness that is derived from experience, all the disillusionments which spring from the rubs and example of life, had aged and ripened the mind, hardened and confirmed the heart of this young girl, almost a child, this Félicité de Nesle, who put in the first plan of her elevation, the dismissal of her sister, Madame de Mailly. It was, as it were, a premonition, a Machiavelic inspiration, which had guided her on the path of the greatness she foresaw, to which she almost attained, and towards which her young thought unfalteringly advanced. All her hopes rested upon a study, or rather a presumption of the humour of the King, in whom, from the hearsay and rumours of her convent, she assumed and divined the physiognomy, the personality, the habits, the swaying will, and the character so pliant to influence, the disgusts, lassitudes and weaknesses. Already she

¹ *Memoirs of the Duc de Luynes.* Vol. iii.

astonished a confidante of her own age, confounded yet almost convinced by the tone of assurance with which she spoke of the easy victories which she would win over the King at the first assault,¹ by means of those quarrels and tyrannies which women know how to employ so well, by a reign of jealousy, alarms, scenes, petulances, contradictions—in a word, by the ascendancy of that kind of fear, which alone renders durable the government of love. She had no illusions as to her beauty, out of which, as she knew, little was to be made; but she counted on the liveliness of her wit, far more pleasant and more youthful than that of her sister, on the energy of her humour and ideas, on the growing influence which every superior and mobile nature imposes, in the commerce of life, on the timidity and indolence of the being associated with it. And we see her writing every day to her sister, begging her to summon her to her, appealing to her tenderness with the endearments and puerilities of a little spoiled sister, already interesting the King, perhaps, over Madame de Mailly's shoulder, by these pretty effusions and the playful expressions of a school-girl's mind. Madame de Mailly did not hold out long, and the young person sprang from her convent to Versailles.

Mademoiselle Félicité de Nesle appeared at court; but the courtiers who saw her hardly found in her the material for, or the future of, a mistress. What met their eyes was a long neck set clumsily on the shoulders, a mannish figure, a virile carriage, features not unlike the features of Madame de Mailly, but thinner, almost harsh, which showed none of her flashes of kindness, none of the tenderness of passion.² No sooner had the young sister of Madame de Mailly arrived at court than she brought into play all the resources of her character, which was frolicsome, audacious, and as it had been animated by the wine-cup. In order to advance herself, she profited

¹ *Memoirs of the Maréchal Duc de Richelieu.* Vol. v.
² *Ibid.*

by the King's first astonishment, intimidating him by her mockery, which was so novel to a prince hitherto surrounded by submission. She confronted his desires with the apparent innocence and the coquettish freedom of a second Charolois, but with more consistency, a bolder continuity, a malice more epigrammatic, in which the King was delighted to recognise the qualities of his own mind. And this school-girl was not slow in rendering herself so agreeable, so necessary to the King, that he could no longer dispense with her, and seemed to have no more taste for conversation or society, save in the company of this amusing child, who shed gaiety all around her. Mademoiselle de Nesle fortified this taste and gave it the solidity of a habit, never leaving the King to himself, keeping him ever under the charm of her caprice, with the invention of fresh pleasures, with paradoxical thoughts, with the whirlwind of energy and imagination, which had been her nature before it became her rôle. Madame de Mailly still kept her place as official mistress, separated only by the width of the hearth from the place where the King played,¹ but she had no more than the remnants of the King's tenderness and caresses. Railing outbursts, ill-natured tricks, which went one day to the point of cutting up her tapestry,² comparisons in her sister's favour, quarrels, all the consequences of the King's infidelity were slowly preparing Madame de Mailly for the confession which was to destroy her last illusion. The King avowed that he loved her sister as much as herself. Almost immediately, a marriage was arranged for Mademoiselle de Nesle with a young gentleman endowed with much philosophy, quite indifferent to human respect, who looked upon such a marriage as a position, and found it highly agreeable to assist at the supper-parties in the apartments, and make use of the King's horses as the stables of his wife: this husband was

¹ *Memoirs of the Duc de Luynes.* Vol. iii.

² *Memoirs of the Marquis d'Argenson.* Janet, 1857, vol. ii.

M. le Comte de Vintimille, whose name was to shield Mademoiselle de Nesle and the moiety of the King's amours.

The marriage of Mademoiselle de Nesle was announced at Marly on the 15th of September 1739. The King gave 200,000 livres of money down, the expectation of a place as lady of the palace to Madame la Dauphine, which carried with it a pension of 6000 livres, and, beyond that, a lodging at Versailles, in the new wing, which the court had dubbed maliciously the *Rue des Noailles*. On the 29th the bridal pair lay at Madrid, the residence of Mademoiselle de Charolois, and the King paid M. de Vintimille the honour of handing him the shirt: he was the first husband to be thus honoured by Louis XV.¹

Doubtless, it was a shameful piece of complaisance, this patience of Madame de Mailly and her participation in the faithless amours of Louis XV., and she gave a flagrant example of the most humiliating cowardice and the meanest compromises by remaining where she was, compelled to submit to everything in order not to be in the way; unfortunate woman! who, bowing her head to harsh words and digesting the insult of being barely tolerated, picked up what crumbs of the King's heart her sister flung to her! And yet one word will suffice to excite our pity for her even in her shame: she loved.

In face of this humility of Madame de Mailly, her unrebeling resignation, her entreaties not to be dismissed, Madame de Vintimille, who had been prepared for a struggle to the death, changed her plan. Absolute mistress of the King's mind, she had no fear of leaving her sister beside him. All her precautions were confined to separating Madame de Mailly from persons who might lead her and influence her resolutions. Mademoiselle de Charolois, who had made Madame de Mailly's mind a pliant instrument, was excluded from the supper-parties,

¹ *Memoirs of the Duc de Luynes.* Vol. iii.

as well as her sister, Mademoiselle de Clermont.¹ Her skill in dispelling dulness, her witticisms were obscured in the King's view by Madame de Vintimille; and her exigencies, the pressure she put upon the King in order to place her lover, Vauréal, at the ministry of foreign affairs² gave an opportunity to Madame de Vintimille and a pretext to the King to procure her complete disgrace. This riddance effected, Madame de Vintimille turned Madame de Mailly's sympathies toward the Noailles, whose ambition she was aware of, but also their constancy and devotion. Then, looking beyond, seeking solid foundations for her favour, she entered, and dragged Madame de Mailly into, the paths of politics, and the protection of the two sisters was directed to two men, towards whom public opinion was looking at that moment as the hopes of the future: Chauvelin and the Maréchal de Belle-Isle.

The Maréchal de Belle-Isle, captain, administrator, orator, politician, the magnificent patron of an army of clients, the spoilt darling of the populace—that Pompey in short, Belle-Isle—had not issued without difficulty from the night of obscurity in which Louis XIV. had sought to confine the family of Fouquet. Belle-Isle was the grandson of the famous Superintendant. It was only under the Regency that Belle-Isle began to come forward, after having shared everything, present, future, fortune, with a younger brother, endowed with qualities which he lacked, who was in the shadow and second plan, another half of himself, the modest genius and moderating spirit of his ambition and character. The two Belle-Isles came to Dubois and D'Argenson with the resources of a subtle understanding, views and projects of an inexhaustible imagination, fit and prepared for anything. We next see them gaining solidity under the ministry of M. le Duc by their grip of foreign affairs, by the command

¹ *Memoirs of the Marquis d'Argenson.*

² *Journal Historique du Règne de Louis XV.*, par Barbier. Vol. ii.

which the elder obtained in the war with Germany, and a combination of bold projects which nothing could discourage, and which, repulsed or opposed, returned incessantly to the charge, and made a breach in the policy of the Cardinal de Fleury. Thenceforward, the Belle-Isles were only to grow in greatness. Bound closely together, each was the completion of the other. To the Chevalier belonged the ideas, reflection, the invention of means, the devising of projects, consistency, solidity, insinuation, persuasion. The Duke had all the brilliancy of a great comedian in carrying out what his brother imagined, and reaping the success. He lacked none of those qualities which appeal to the public, which seduce and overwhelm opinion. He was one of those empty but sonorous men, born to be what most resembles a great man : the filler of a great part. He had brilliancy and passion ; and whilst his brother's utterances only gained individuals, his own won over whole parties. Both alike, Duke and Chevalier, had the art of making friends on every side, of mustering devoted adherents to their glory, of organising enthusiasm, of sowing faith in their projects, confidence in their work,¹ from the court to the people ; and they advanced unwearyingly towards the realisation of these projects and this work, marching in their union and their strength, and displaying, in the midst of a world divided by interest and devoured by egoism, the fraternity of two spirits married and confounded in a single will and a single ambition.

These two men represented the party hostile to Austria, the war party, the opposition to the policy of the Cardinal, that policy of peace at any price, whose glory it was to keep closed the doors of the Temple of Janus. They accused the Cardinal of having, by his timidity and cowardice, already three times spared and safe-guarded the Austrian monarchy ; in 1730, after the establishment

¹ *Chronique du Règne de Louis XV., 1742-1743.—Revue Rétrospective.*
Vol. iv., 1834.

of the Company of Ostend ; in 1734, after the taking of Philisbourg, and the Campaign in Italy which left the Emperor nothing beside Mantua ; in 1739, when Fleury had coerced victorious Turkey when she was prepared to march to the conquest of Austria. The death of Charles VI. (November 20th, 1740), the complications which were to lead to the Pragmatic-Sanction, seemed to the two Belle-Isles to offer France an opportunity of reviving the projects of Richelieu, of carrying them to their extreme, and making an end of the House of Austria, the sword and rights of which were then in a woman's hand. It was with this aim that the Duc de Belle-Isle, having become the intimate of Madame de Mailly, discussed the dismemberment, the participation of the provinces of Maria-Theresa, to whom he would consent to leave no more than a petty sovereignty, giving back to the Bohemians and Hungarians the right of election to their crown, rendered hereditary by the House of Austria. Belle-Isle, by his enthusiasm and eloquent speech, infected Madame de Mailly with his own illusions as to the possibility of this despoilment of Austria and the opportunity for recasting the map of Europe.¹ He spoke to her of acting first in the north, by means of negotiations, and sending 150,000 men to the south of Germany to strike a decisive blow, in concert with the King of Prussia. He painted a picture of Europe for the King's mistress, according to which everything was in our favour, and which promised our aggression the alliance of some and the patient neutrality of others. He showed her England, occupied at home in reconstituting the monarchical principle, her demoralisation by the corrupt ministry of Walpole, her embarrassment from the naval war with Spain, her apprehensions over her Electorate of Hanover, the lack of initiative of her King, all the reasons, in fine, which must needs paralyse her action. He showed her Russia, a prey to internal divisions, and distracted from the rest of Europe by the

movements of the Swedes. He told her of the sure alliance France would obtain from Prussia, who needed support for her invasion of Silesia, and to whom the Austrian provinces suited to her would be offered ; of the alliance to be obtained from Spain, the support from the wife of Philip V., that ambitious princess who was not yet satisfied by the establishment of Don Carlos at Naples, but who dreamt of Tuscany or Milan for the establishment of a second Infante. Belle-Isle further pointed out to Madame de Mailly and Madame de Vintimille the almost certain alliance of Piedmont, if her territory was enlarged at the expense of Austria, the probable uprising of the Turks, the all-powerful aid that the Elector of Bavaria would give to France in return for the offer of the Imperial Crown. Briefly, he left nothing unsaid that might inflame the mind, the imagination and the pride of the two favourites ; he only asked for six months in order to succeed ; and what glory would not the King reap from success ! He would be a new sovereign, free of the Cardinal's leading-strings. And what merit for the two sisters for having urged the enterprise ! What would be the public gratitude to them, what the thanks rendered to them by the King's love ! The Cardinal de Fleury raised the objection of France's engagements to the Pragmatic-Sanction. He recalled in vain the price which had been paid to France for it ; the cession of Lorraine to Stanislas, with a reversion to the Crown of France. In vain he recalled the King's pledged word, his promise to the Prince of Lichtenstein, at the time of Maria-Theresa's accession, that he would *not be false to any of his engagements*. All his efforts were frustrated by the influence of the favourites, seduced by the grandiose plans and flattering explanations of Belle-Isle. Madame de Mailly, to whom Madame de Vintimille left the most compromising part of the struggle, exclaimed that the Cardinal was only "an old dotard, capable of ruining the State," and however divided and waning was her authority

over the King, however great his own indolence where affairs of State were concerned, she, nevertheless, drew from the enthusiasm which Belle-Isle had inspired in her, sufficient strength, sufficient power over herself and the King's mind to drag Louis XV. into the party of war. This victory of Belle-Isle and the favourites effected a sort of revolution in politics, or at least in the avowed policy of the Cardinal; he equivocated, then temporised with the plans which were in the ascendancy, and appeared to lend himself to the final blow they wished to give the Austrian monarchy. But, economical ever, ever intent upon warding off war, delighted, moreover, on this occasion to cut off the supplies from the project of an enemy whom glory might render more dangerous, he paved the way for Belle-Isle's failure by only granting him forty thousand of the hundred and fifty thousand men he asked. Meanwhile, Madame de Mailly obtained Belle-Isle's nomination as ambassador-extraordinary and plenipotentiary of the King at the Diet of Frankfort for the election of an Emperor; she obtained for him the mission of making a tour through Germany in order to rally the Electors and Princes of the Emperor to the side of France. Inspired by Madame de Vintimille, she supported him at court with all the energy and influence she possessed, endeavouring to spur the King's apathy with the national susceptibilities, repeating that vengeance should be had upon Maria-Theresa for all the affronts which Austria had put upon France, repeating in the salon of Choisy: "Pray, are we to take a hundred strokes of the lash without avenging ourselves?" Belle-Isle made his tour, encouraged by Madame de Mailly's letters; on his way he tightened our bonds with Bavaria, won over two Electors to the cause of France, caused a third to waver, laboured to attach the King of Prussia to French policy; whilst the Cardinal, involved in the tendency of mind which was instigated by Mesdames de Vintimille and De Mailly, and Belle-Isle's party, endeavoured to deceive Maria-Theresa by

the ambiguity of his replies. And when the inadequacy of the army granted to Belle-Isle, and the obstinacy of the Elector of Bavaria, after having prevented the French troops from marching to Vienna, had shut them up in Bohemia; when the heroism of Maria-Theresa, the defection of Prussia, the double-faced policy of the Cardinal in his negotiations with the Queen of Hungary, the disagreements between the generals, had brought about the collapse of the campaign and of Belle-Isle's projects, the two favourites could no longer repress their complaints against the Cardinal. They openly accused him of having wasted the opportunity, of having compromised the Maréchal and betrayed the French army by his irresoluteness, breaches of faith, and the insufficiency of his supplies. The alarmed Cardinal was desirous of escaping from these complaints and ridding himself of Belle-Isle's army by secret negotiations for peace. Madame de Mailly foiled this project. A letter she had caused to be written to her from the army, and which she left lying about on her table, acquainted the King with the truth; and the Cardinal, in spite of his resistance to the Council, was forced to support the Elector of Bavaria and to order Maillebois to march to Bohemia.

This policy of the two sisters actually survived Madame de Vintimille, and was continued after her death by Madame de Mailly, who was unceasing, until the day of her disgrace, in supporting on every occasion the *Bellisien* party, the person and ideas of Belle-Isle.¹

When, on the 8th of March 1792, after a visit to Issy, Belle-Isle came to complain of the indecency of the attacks made upon him, and the malicious reports which made his family fear lest he should be sent to the Bastille, Madame de Mailly supported his complaints with so much zeal that she took the court with her, and, in spite of the King's presence, the assembly testified to its lively sym-

¹ *Chronique Secrète du Règne de Louis XV.—Revue Rétrospective.* 1834, vol. v.

pathy with Belle-Isle, and its disgust with the persecutions of the Cardinal. This protection of Madame de Mailly was constant and unflagging. Madame de Mailly still struggled for Belle-Isle, even at a time when she had to struggle for herself. In the midst of the alarms of her amour she works to maintain him in the King's favour, and to strengthen him in the public estimation. At a time when, of the forty thousand men sent to Germany, Prague only sends us back eight thousand in the month of November 1742, Madame de Mailly compels the King, who had not spoken to Beauveau, to recall him and to talk to him all through supper of Broglie's long torpor, his errors and the genius of Belle-Isle ; and by this master-stroke, which was promptly reported, she not only shelters the Maréchal, she not only reassures his friends, but also inveigles the King into a public promise to continue to employ the Maréchal with larger means of action.¹

By their protection of Belle-Isle, the two sisters flattered the natural pride, that spirit of war and conquest which has always intoxicated France : they needed a hero for their game ; it was a popularity which they required to shelter themselves. The protection which the two sisters gave to Chauvelin was quite different both in its aim and method : it aimed at flattering another sentiment in public opinion, and it steered with caution and reserve between the rancours of the house of Toulouse and the hostilities of Rambouillet's faction, between the King's antipathy against the person of the ex-chancellor, and the hostility of the Noailles, who were jealous of Chauvelin's influence and party.²

This secret, almost unacknowledged *protégé* of Mesdames de Vintimille and De Mailly, this Chauvelin, reproached by his enemies for deriving his origin from a sausage-shop —a shop, withal, savouring of nobility, for it went back

¹ *Mémoires du Maréchal Duc de Richelieu.* Vol. vi.—*Mémoires et Journal inédit du Marquis d'Argenson.* Vol. ii.

² *Journal Historique de Louis XV., par Barbier.* 1854, vol. ii.

to 1543¹—had been weighed down on his entrance into the world by the superiority of an elder brother. This had driven him, in order to cut some figure by the side of this brother, towards talents and accomplishments, and every means of succeeding open to the man of the world : without a rival in physical exercises, the most skilful of horsemen, the best of dancers, the most cunning of swordsmen, ignorant of nothing that a man ought to know, endowed with all the qualities which delight fashion, women, love, an agreeable singer, a pretty talker, he found time to become a serious man. A health that nothing could try, a persistent will, an enormous power of working, permitted him to find in a dissipated and frivolous life the necessary strength, leisure and application for that second education which remoulds the ideas, settles the mind and forms the character. First a noticeable advocate-general, then husband of the rich daughter of a tax-collector, then velvet-capped president, allied on this side or that, related slightly to the Beringhens, slightly, through the Louvois, to the Duc d'Aumont, he spread out so many feelers, covered himself with so many and such diverse protections, that the Regent said jestingly, that everything spoke to him of Chauvelin, that *the very stones repeated the name to him*. Unemployed during the Regency, he attached himself to Cardinal de Fleury. Recommended to him by the Maréchal d'Uxelles, Chauvelin made himself invaluable to the Cardinal by his knowledge of public law, obtained from the manuscripts of M. de Harlai. In the confidence of the Cardinal, he became, through his means, minister of foreign affairs and keeper of the seals. But Chauvelin's relations with M. le Duc and Madame la Duchesse, his mother, who had made him her instrument, the pride of his superiority over the Cardinal, his influence abroad, where he supported the policy of Belle-Isle, the vast ambition he shared with his wife, which was delivered over at that very moment (1737) to the derision

¹ *Mémoires du Comte de Maurepas.* Paris, Buisson, 1792, vol. iii

of the public in the comedy of *L'Ambitieux*,¹ the audacity of his confidence, his personal illusions, the illusions of his friends, had led to his banishment to Bourges.

None the less Chauvelin remained, even at Bourges and in disgrace, a power, a party, and an idea. He had left warm friends in Paris, and opinion looked for his return with the liveliest hope. The fact was that at this period, so quiet and somnolent in appearance, so agitated and aroused in reality, in the midst of the clash of consciences, in face of the Church, so full of violence and factions, in which the greatest families were forced to mingle in order to retain or win benefices, in face of the scandal of the struggle round the Bull *Unigenitus*, the tearing up and partition of the human soul into human parties : Jesuitism, Molinism, Jansenism, Sulpicianism ; in face of the triumph of Sulpicianism, whose manœuvres, timid at first, in the Council of Embrun amounted to persecution, Chauvelin represented toleration, a toleration with leanings towards the persecuted. Chauvelin was on the side of the Parliament, which was the centre of Jansenism. Chauvelin minister, and the public was assured that the Parliament would not be robbed of its jurisdiction over ecclesiastical matters for the benefit of a ministerial commission, which had been talked of. And the Parliament itself, which, through the eloquent voice of the Abbé Pucelle, seemed to be emboldening itself for the remonstrances of the future and paving the way for the audacities of the Third Estate, the Parliament saw in Chauvelin's return, an encouragement and a victory.

Energetic, widely known, and by his innumerable relations, by a voluminous correspondence penetrating the ministry and external sources, a *persona grata* to the best accredited women, insinuating, and of an affectionate politeness which bordered on grace, Chauvelin won further popularity by the orderly habit of his life, the simplicity of his existence at Gusbois, by the rare example of a husband who never

¹ *Papers of the Abbé Cherrier.* Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal. MSS.

slept or supped out, but passed his evenings in work, by his habits of application, as well as by that fine phrase, the public welfare, which, in his mouth, first paved the way to his worldly success.¹ The state of men's minds, therefore, and the character of the man, combined to give the first place in public sympathy to the disgraced minister whom the two sisters supported, perhaps without realising the tendency of the movement which inspired them, and which brought them into contact with the party of *honest folk*.

These were the wishes of the nation which Madame de Vintimille reported more loudly every day to the King, pointing out to him the weakness of his Council, the necessity of strengthening it, until she at last decided her lover to recall his former minister. The letter was written, it was handed to the Duc de Villeroy, Chauvelin's friend ; the courier was booted ready to set off. But, at the last moment, the King confided in the Cardinal, who was adroit enough to admit the weakness of the Council and call to it the Comte d'Argenson and Cardinal de Tencin.² By this means the ministry escaped from Chauvelin and Fleury out-played Madame de Vintimille.

After this check, Madame de Vintimille beats a retreat and changes her manœuvres and tactics. Her great art is to occupy the King, her great efforts are directed to teaching him to have a will. It seems that she has an idea of preparing him for the government of the State by the administration of his household and of interesting him in the Royal power through private and domestic authority. We see her greatly busied in giving Louis XV. a taste for some kind of economy in his interior ; she goads him into considering the details of his establishment, makes him dismiss Lazare, who was stealing his champagne : the master's eye is already open, although that of the King is still shut. By this little round of unimportant decisions and petty affairs she shakes the sluggishness of his will.

¹ *Mémoires du Marquis d'Argenson.* Vol ii.

² *Ibid.*

She frees and hardens his resolution ; and the King himself is grateful to her for having found him this pastime, and thus reduced his shyness by the exercise of a diverting initiative.

Whilst Madame de Vintimille is thus occupying the King, she is likewise emancipating him ; she gently frees him from the influences and artifices of his surroundings by the use of banter which is afraid of no one and does not even spare Bachelier : " Well, well, Sire, are you going to tell your valet-de-chambre that too ? " is the ordinary phrase with which Madame de Vintimille pricks the King's self-conceit, and puts him on his guard against confidences which leave the master, even when he is a King, at his valet's mercy.

By thus amusing the King, by giving him a new taste for energy and independence, Madame de Vintimille is not long before she rules him. The King smiles and lends himself to her plans, friendships and policy, which never loses sight of the complete overthrow of the Cardinal, and the creation of a ministry composed of creatures, but animated by a spirit of strength and inspiration of grandeur, never possessed by the Government of the aged Fleury. None the less, although sure of the King, Madame de Vintimille only moves with caution. She uses discretion and restraint and leaves nothing to impatience. Henceforth, she seems afraid of abusing her opportunity, and trusts to time alone to dislodge the Cardinal. All her skill and moderation at the zenith of her success and favour are revealed when the death of the Duc de La Trémouille renders vacant a post as gentleman of the chamber. The Cardinal coveted the place for his nephew the Duc de Fleury ; Madame de Vintimille solicited it for the Duc de Luxembourg. The Cardinal, as his custom was, spoke of resigning, in order to intimidate the King's will and secure the favour. At the same time, in order the better to hold Luxembourg aloof, he was ostensibly supporting the claims of La Trémouille's son. The King,

embarrassed and irresolute, happened to say that the Cardinal was more attached to his credit than to his master's person. In spite of these words, the attempts and hopes they authorised, Madame de Vintimille did not deem it expedient to push things to extremes and the hostility of the King to a declaration. She changed her tactics, suddenly broke off her efforts in Luxembourg's favour, and, previously instructing her sister whom she always put forward, told him that he must nominate Fleury and bring back the Cardinal from his retreat at Issy. There was no time to lose; the King had just signed the letter which accepted his prime minister's resignation. That same night, the following scene passed in the King's bed. Madame de Mailly questioned the King about his worries, accepted his defence of the Cardinal, defended him herself, and persuaded the King to leave the letter on the chimney-piece, finally to burn it, and appoint the Duc de Fleury gentleman of the chamber with a retainer of 400,000 livres.¹

Madame de Vintimille, it is obvious, was unwilling to do anything in haste, as she wished to run no risk. A disgrace of that character brought about by a momentary irritation of the King's would not satisfy her: it might leave the King with regrets, and the Cardinal would be recalled; and it was a more assured and complete fall which Madame de Vintimille had dreamed of, which she meditated and promised herself when she felt her womb quick with the promise of a child and the pledge of her future domination. Madame de Vintimille had calculated justly. Time only attached the King more to her; daily growing more estranged from Madame de Mailly, disgusted by her tears and sadness, and barely supporting from habit her clumsy affection. In 1740, the court made the remark that Madame de Vintimille was the only woman to receive a New Year's gift from the

¹ *Mémoires du Maréchal Duc de Richelieu.* 1793, vol. v.

King.¹ And she became the sovereign of Choisy, that Choisy bought by the King from the Princesse de Conti, which was the beginning of that belt of hunting-lodges and small houses which royalty was soon to cast round Paris and Versailles wherever there was room enough to lodge pleasure, shade enough to hide love, and sun enough to divert Louis XV.!

A delicious retreat this little château of Choisy, so admirably suited to deliver royalty from the etiquette of Marly, and permit it the ease and amusements of private life. Its situation on the banks of the Seine, close by the forest of Sénart, between trees and water, at the foot of a hill, protected from the south winds, its internal attractions, the alterations which it had taken three months to effect, the commodious and secluded communications, discreet and secret doors, the dining-room so gaily elegant, "the sculpture, gold, and azure, the best intended of furniture," the profusion of mirrors, the convenience, the good taste, the gallantry which was the genius and the secret of the art of the time, all tended to make the little château an adorable hiding-place for lovers.² The King took a remarkable delight in it; he found a vent there for his architectural tastes, his ideas of decoration. He found there the pleasures of proprietorship, watching the labourers at work, having a labyrinth and a skittle-alley laid out under his supervision, marking what trees were to be cut down to improve the view. There he led the life of a private gentleman; round him there he permitted the liberty of the life of a country house; and Choisy afforded the courtiers of the old court of Louis XIV. the astounding spectacle of the governor of the château taking his place at his master's side, the King's company taking their seats on chairs with backs, women moving about in dressing-gowns, sometimes even, to the scandal of the Duc de Luynes, in *peignoirs* and

¹ *Mémoires du Duc de Luynes.* Vol. iii.

² *Journal Historique de Barbier.* 1854, vol. ii.

without hoops. On the days when the King did not hunt, and the little closed calash did not convey the ladies in his suite, there was Mass at midday, breakfast at one, at three the ladies played in their apartments, whither the King repaired, as master of the house; at half-past seven or eight o'clock came supper, followed by a *cavagnol* of ten tables, which lasted from an hour and a half to two hours.¹ At Choisy, Madame de Vintimille was served and obeyed by the King, whose love had reduced him to the last degree of weakness, whilst the ambitions of Madame de Vintimille were emboldening her to the greatest exactions. It was in this charming palace that she was seized with a slight fever on the 11th of August 1741. The King, who had been forced to pass a couple of days at Versailles, received four couriers daily; then at the end of two days hastened to Choisy. Nothing was discussed at court but the King's anxiety during this pregnancy, which promised ill, the night spent by the King almost entirely in Madame de Vintimille's room, on the eve of her delivery, the King's attentions and caresses to the fine baby which was laid on a cushion of cramoisi velvet.² It was said that the Queen's children had never appealed to the King's heart so keenly, and that the child of the Vintimille aroused sentiments of paternity in him hitherto unknown. From this the courtiers were calculating and openly predicting the great future before Madame de Vintimille, when an eruptive fever carried off the favourite and cast her, in the prime of her life, still clasping her fortune and her dream, to the arms of death.

On the 9th of December, Madame de Vintimille, became suddenly so ill that the King sent at the same time for Silva from Paris, and Senac, who was the physician of Saint-Cyr. But their remedies came too late. Tortured with atrocious suffering, in despair, and fighting against a death

¹ *Mémoires du Duc de Luynes.* Didot, 1860. Vol. iii.

² *Mémoires du Maréchal Duc de Richelieu.* Vol. v.

which was full of terror, and which seemed to betray the violence of poison, the sick woman sends for a confessor : she died almost instantly in his arms, without having had time to receive the sacraments. And as the confessor, charged with the dying woman's last words to her sister, entered Madame de Mailly's salon, he fell dead.

It was a thunderbolt to the King. He sobbed, till he had no more breath. He shut himself up, and listened half-dead to a Mass from his bed. Consolations, kindnesses, he repulsed them all, in order to be left alone with his sorrow ; whilst, thrust away into a stable in the palace, the body of the dead woman, which had been kept for a cast to be taken, that distorted countenance, that mouth which had breathed out its soul in a convulsion, so that the efforts of two men had been required to close it for moulding, the already decomposing remains of Madame de Vintimille served as a plaything and a laughing-stock to the children and lackeys of Versailles !¹

The grief, the trouble, the confusion of his first despair were so great with the King that, fleeing Versailles, escaping the homilies of the Cardinal on human frailty, and the consolations of the Queen, who was alarmed and touched by his grief, he went, to hide his tears and give them full liberty, to the little country-seat of Saint-Leger,² where he took no other company with him but Madame de Mailly, the Duc d'Ayen and the Duc de Villeroy. The King buried himself in his regrets. He took a cruel joy, a mournful satisfaction in renewing and reviving them. He busied himself, surrounded himself, seemed to live and be nourished with the recollection of all this woman had been, and he pursued her shadow in everything which spoke of her, in all that death spares of a woman who is no more, retracing the days step by step, plunged in the perusal of the letters he had written to her, and those he had received, trying to seize once more day by day

¹ *Mémoires du Marquis d'Argenson.* Janet, 1857, vol. ii.

² *Journal Historique du Règne de Louis XV.,* par Barbier. Vol. ii.

the trace and the perfume of the time that had gone, passing from relic to relic, from echo to echo, to return always to that casket of two thousand letters, the urn which held the heart of their love.

The King's grief found a confidante, a friend, in Madame de Mailly, poor woman, who had so thoroughly sacrificed her happiness to the King's pleasures that she mourned a sister in Madame de Vintimille, and was not humiliated to see that there was now nothing more between the King and herself than the bond of the tears and regrets she gave to her rival. The sudden nature of that death, its horror, its mystery, the suspicions round the bed, the insults round the body, the miserable end which Providence seemed to have abandoned to the hands and irony of men in order to render it more exemplary and more striking, had overwhelmed the impressionable and ardent young man. It was as it had been a terrible warning which had cast him back into the abysses of terror which were the result of his nature and his education. All the terrors of God, a ceaseless anxiety as to the Heavenly punishments, seized him and harassed his distractions, his errors, his neglects. At the suppers in the little apartments, the gaiety with which the courtiers sought to divert him was checked by the King's silence, a glacial silence, which made the party immediately mute ; at the end of it the King's lips would let fall these words : "I do not mind suffering from my rheumatism, and, if you knew the reason, you would approve of it : I suffer in expiation of my sins. . . ."

Thus passed those strange and lugubrious suppers, mirrors of the soul of Louis XV., where every moment the clink of glasses and the laughter at talk that was inclined to become free was interrupted by the devout repentance of the King, who abstained from meat in order that he might not "commit sins on every side" ; who suddenly stopped an incipient smile to indulge in remorse, speaking incessantly of death and burial ; whilst if, at that moment, his eyes met the eyes of Madame de Mailly, he would

burst into tears and be compelled to leave the table, unable to escape from the death of Madame de Vintimille, in which he found a supreme terror passing death itself; a death without the sacraments, without reconciliation with God. One might have said that the terrors and frailties of a second Henri III. possessed the conscience of this eighteenth century king, who mingled acts of contrition with a lover's tears.

The participation of Madame de Mailly in his sorrow brought him back to her, and his very remorse gave him a need to be perpetually in company. One night, Meuse, supping with the King and Madame de Mailly, was much astonished when the King offered him a small apartment above his little gallery; and the King described to him the accommodation there was: there would be a small ante-chamber, a second ante-chamber where meals could be taken, a bed-room, a closet, an office, a kitchen, a dressing-room in which one might sleep. The King, next, spoke to Meuse of the table he wished to be maintained there; for he would have the honour of entertaining his master to dinner and supper, as well as Coigny and Luxembourg, on their return from the army. Meuse, who understood the King's arrangement, for whom and for what the apartment would serve, diverted himself by declaring that he was a lover of good cheer, and arranged his daily *menu* beforehand, a soup, a piece of beef, two *entrées*, a roast, two sweets, and asked Madame de Mailly to be so kind as to assist him a little to fix the subsidy. He was allowed 1500 livres a month to harbour the King's amours; and the King, interrupting, for a moment, the suppers in the little apartments, secluded himself with his mistress, where, served by a single trencherman, he spent less than a financier does upon an opera-dancer. After some time had been passed in this reconciliation, this alliance of tears and funereal sensuality, Louis XV. was again seized with ennui and the *liaison*, once more, began to dwindle. Only the affectionate scenes made by Madame de Mailly delayed a rupture; they still held

the King in bondage, although, disgusted at his weakness, he avenged himself by harshness and ill-humour, which drove the unhappy woman to despair. At last, the fatal *dénouement*, for which the King was impatiently if irresolutely waiting, was precipitated by a man who was beginning to acquire an ascendancy over the King's mind. He was not yet an intimate of the private apartments ; but on the rare occasions when he had been invited to supper, the young courtier had reaped much success by the glow of his wit, the indiscreet chronicle of his amours, and the little halo of scandal which was beginning to form round his name. The Princesse de Charolois, before Madame de Vintimille had ousted her from the management of Madame de Mailly's compliant mind, had commenced by putting the favourite on her guard against this new-comer : the Duc de Richelieu. Animated against him by ancient heart-grievances, and never forgiving him, in spite of the patchings-up and reconciliations, for the small store he set on her love, the Princess held forth unceasingly to Madame de Mailly upon the danger of letting into the near proximity of the King a man who erected man's inconstancy into a principle, a man ambitious of obtaining the first place in the King's confidence and a sort of ministry of his amours. Hence, Madame de Mailly's extreme coldness to the Duc, an intrigue carried on so skilfully against his nascent credit, that the King inflicted upon him what was almost exile. But the precautions taken by Madame de Mailly were abandoned, and Richelieu returned to court, furious against Madame de Mailly, and determined to force upon the King a woman devoted to himself, of a more individual character, and less susceptible to external impressions. He allied himself with Madame de Tencin in her endeavours to supplant and oust out Madame de Mailly. Both held a review of the court, they scrutinised its women, weighed the chances of beauty, wit, youth, and grace ; they calculated each one's amount of gratitude and docility ; they estimated

the degree and extent of the King's domination; and their choice, after having long wavered, landed upon a woman who had the advantage of exacting but few efforts from the enemies of Madame de Mailly, in order to turn the King's admiration for her into love. This was the beauty, who, the first time she was seen by Louis XV., when at Petit-Bourg, with M. le Duc d'Antin, had drawn from him the exclamation: "My God! how beautiful she is!" It was a sister of Madame de Mailly and Madame de Vintimille, Madame de La Tournelle.¹ The youth of Madame de La Tournelle, her interesting position as a widow, her coquetry, her very blood, that blood of the Nesles towards which a singular appetite and, as it were, the fascination of habit impelled the King, all tended to maintain that first impression in the King's heart and to render it stronger. But Madame de La Tournelle lived with Madame de Mazarin; she was her companion, her inseparable friend, almost her adopted daughter; and Madame de Mazarin was held by the King in horror, the King in whom time wore out neither his repulsions nor antipathies, and who was ready to involve whole families in the disgrace of individuals. Madame de Mazarin was the confidante and intimate adviser of the Queen, who, doubtless, in her candour, was ignorant of the rumours of Madame de Mazarin's amours. Louis XV. knew that it was she who had borne the Queen the news of his *liaison* with Madame de Mailly; she too, who had suggested a council to arrange beforehand the succession to the kingdom and the Queen's regency in the event of the King's death; now Louis XV. never forgave those who looked forward to such eventualities, in which he read an impatience to inherit from him. This ill-feeling of the King against Madame de Mazarin checked the commencement of the intrigue, the first incentives which Richelieu brought to the King, the flame he was fanning

¹ Fragment from the *Memoirs of the Duchesse de Brancas*.—*Lettres de Lauraguais à Madame X. Buisson*, an x.

in that unforgotten caprice. This amour, moreover, which was, as it were, Richelieu's creature, had two enemies, Cardinal de Fleury and Maurepas. In spite of the paucity of witnesses of the King's two or three encounters with Madame de La Tournelle at Petit-Bourg, the Cardinal had been informed of the fresh temptations offered to the King ; he was sincerely grieved to recognise a deliberate plan for the King's ruin. If he had been able to shut his eyes to his pupil's first fault, an error of youth and hot blood, he could not see, with patience, his future compromised in a succession of scandals and a libertine career. Richelieu terrified him as the King's evil genius. The old man divined his projects, his successes, and he had a presentiment of what would become, beneath his hands, of the religious conscience and the very honour of Louis XV. Moreover, if in the eyes of the priest, the Christian, Madame de Mailly was the best of mistresses, the one who endowed a scandal with the greatest show of modesty, and brought to sin the least amount of impenitence, she was also, from the minister's point of view, the one who had displayed the least insolence whilst in favour, and sought personally for the smallest amount of power. The Cardinal had everything to fear then from the dismissal of Madame de Mailly : audacity given to the King from his changing, his inconstancy strengthened and led away to the practice of debauchery, the weakening of his religious sense ; then, beyond these spiritual anxieties there remained the solicitude for temporal affairs : the King's will passing into the hands of a woman whom Fleury might be unable to manage as easily as he had managed Madame de Mailly.¹

These fears of the Cardinal were allied with Maurepas' repugnances. The latter, that singular minister who had built up his favour and maintained it, on all sorts of frivolous foundations, by the use of a thousand petty accomplishments, petty slanders, petty gossip, petty

■ *Fragments from the Memoirs of the Duchesse de Brancas.—Letters of Lauraguais.*

gasetins, and petty wit, Maurepas, whose great genius in government lay in pleasing and amusing, and who ruled like a woman and by the same means, was naturally jealous of women as his rivals, and of his master's amours as a humiliation of his talents. All his life as a minister reads like one long rancour at their credit, and he might be of their sex to judge of the envy he shows at their prosperity. Thus he maintained a keen opposition to Richelieu. It was a defence full of cunning and feigned attacks against the threatening mistress, expert thrusts and counter-thrusts. Maurepas was everywhere, breaking the intrigue at either end, cooling down the King, who had been inflamed by all the party suggestions, by letting fall an expression, as though by accident, as to the ambition of Madame de Mazarin and Madame de La Tournelle; then, at Madame de Mazarin's, where he enters familiarly, supported as he was by his near kinship, and master of all secrets, we see him dictating the two women's line of conduct, assuring them of his friendship, his good-will, his zeal in their service, seeming to hide nothing from them, to give them everything, zeal, advice, support, credit; and beneath this show of rendering them petty services, keeping them aloof from court. At one moment even, in order the better to play the comedy and deceive the women in the best manner, he feigned, with the most natural air in the world, a violent love for Madame de La Tournelle; he deafened her with it, made her impatient with it, at his good pleasure, and it was as though, at bottom, he took an ironical delight in persecuting Madame de La Tournelle with his affections; she was at that time sufficiently seriously busied with the Duc d'Agenois, to have refused the hand of the Prince de Soubise.

But, in September 1742, Madame de Mazarin died, and Madame de La Tournelle, finding herself alone, with a fortune insufficient for her needs, her name, and life in Paris, deprived of all the resources of friendship and the comforts of her benefactress's home, embarrassed by

her situation as a widow,¹ begged Maurepas, who was heir to Madame de Mazarin, to obtain some favour for her at court. Maurepas sent a reply to her that he would not be able to speak about it to the King without informing the Cardinal, and that she should begin by retiring to a convent before soliciting his Eminence. There are even stories which ascribe greater brutality to Maurepas: as Madame de Mazarin's heir, he had given notice to the two sisters, Madame de La Tournelle and Madame de Flavacourt, that they must leave the Hôtel Mazarin. Not knowing where to take refuge, fatherless, motherless, without protectors, for the husband of Madame de Flavacourt was with the army, the two youthful sisters wended their way to the court, and whilst Madame de La Tournelle, beside herself with rage, was spreading abroad the shameful conduct of M. de Maurepas, her sister, Madame de Flavacourt, had her chair set down in the middle of the courtyard of Versailles, and the supports being removed and the bearers dismissed, remained there tranquilly with naïve serenity and innocent effrontery, full of faith in the Providence which she awaited, and which could not fail to pass. Thus she was not astonished when Providence opened the door of her chair and saluted her; it was the Duc de Gesvres. In the utmost amazement, the Duc asked her how she came there, heard her story, and hastened to relate it to the King, who found it so amusing

¹ M. de La Tournelle, an extremely devout young man, whose share of a small fortune had been spent in almsgiving, died on the 23rd of November 1740, leaving little more to Madame de La Tournelle than what she had brought him: an income of 9000 livres in sixty shares which she had received on her marriage and renunciation of her rights of inheritance. She received 5000 livres dowry, 2000 livres for establishment, and 20,000 livres on reversion. The fortune of the other sisters was not much larger; for, at a partition made in March 1740, they each received no more than an income of 7000 livres; namely, on one account, 100,000 crowns invested at five per cent., 200,000 livres, on the town at ten per cent., and 200,000 francs in ready money; and Madame de Mailly, to whom M. de Nesle had promised an annuity of 8000 livres on her marriage, was fourteen or fifteen years without receiving the arrears. (*Mémoires du Duc de Luynes.* Vol. iii.)

that he, there and then, offered the two sisters a lodging.¹ Unfortunately, this is only a very wittily devised legend of the two sisters' installation at court: such pretty theatrical effects hardly come about, even in courts. Let us leave Madame de Flavacourt's porterless litter in the regions of romance: it is an ungracious unharnessing in which Sterne might find a preface.

We will return to the probability which is simpler. Everything favours the belief that, on the death of Madame de Mazarin, the Queen, ignorant of the place already occupied by Madame de La Tournelle in the King's mind, sent for her to assure her of her intention to bestow upon her Madame de Mazarin's office as lady of the palace. It was in consequence of this opening, that Madame de La Tournelle, irritated and rendered impatient by the derisory support she obtained from Maurepas, went straight to the Cardinal, and asked him outright for the vacant place of lady to the Queen. The Cardinal, confounded by her attitude and the tone of her request, promised to speak of the matter to the King. Thenceforward there was no talk at court save of this step, a confusion of stories and an anguish of supposition. It is the news, the incident upon which all Versailles gloats; and everyone lays stress on this important point; Madame de La Tournelle has not visited Madame de Mailly. Days passed. The emotion and preoccupation of the courtiers was redoubled. The King held his peace. The Cardinal breathed no word of the request, until, after the lapse of a week, the King asked him what was the motive of the visit Madame de La Tournelle had paid him. The Cardinal replied that she was desirous of a place as lady of the palace to the Queen, and that he was about to ask His Majesty if he wished her name to be put on the list of ladies who were soliciting this honour. "Yes," said the King; "I have spoken to the Queen about it." And the same afternoon, in Madame de Mailly's

¹ *Mémoires du Maréchal Duc de Richelieu.* Vol. vi.

apartment, the King related this little scene between the Cardinal and himself, in a cruel voice and with a glance which told Madame de Mailly everything. The embarrassment, the coldness of the King, the long torments of her love, in a moment everything is explained to Madame de Mailly. No sooner has the King started for the chase than she sets off; she flies post haste to Paris, and begs Madame de La Tournelle to come and see her. On Madame de La Tournelle's arrival, poor De Mailly has only tears and kisses with which to question her, until the one word on which her whole heart hangs mounts to her lips and trembles in her voice: she asks her "*Can it be possible?*" . . . "Impossible, my sister!" answers Madame de La Tournelle quickly. Was it a burst of mercy, a pious lie, dragged from her by pity? Or did she indeed belong so entirely to M. d'Agenois, was she so indifferent to the King's nascent passion, that it was a first impulse, the cry of her soul? Be that as it may, the sentence restored Madame de Mailly to life. She returned to Versailles with a joy she could not conceal, with a sense of gratitude which induced her to further her sister's claims.¹

The aged Cardinal and Maurepas had not the illusions, the sisterly blindness of Madame de Mailly. They felt that a place near the Queen's person given to Madame de La Tournelle implied the triumph of Richelieu's party, and that the King would not hold out long against attacks so immediate, authorised and served by daily facilities and opportunities. They were not ignorant that the King was profoundly moved, that he had written to Madame de La Tournelle, and that the death of Madame de Mazarin had been the pretext for a letter in which he had been "tender and affectionate." Who knows? Perhaps, there was already a regular correspondence to which Richelieu brought his pen and which he turned to his own ends. And if Fleury and Maurepas wished to believe things less

¹ Fragment of the *Memoirs of Madame de Brancas*.—*Lettres de Lauraguais à Madame X.* . . . Buisson, an x.

advanced, if they still wished to doubt, all their doubts were removed by this: upon the list of ladies taken to the King by the Cardinal, the King, after making the remark that the name of La Tournelle was at the bottom, wrote it down first, saying to the Cardinal: "The Queen is decided, and wishes to give her the place."¹

Fleury and Maurepas did not yet lose courage, and being no longer able to ignore this wish, so precisely expressed, of the King, endeavoured to outwit it. They made an exhaustive search of the portfolios of their ministries, with regard to the place left vacant by the promotion of Madame de Villars to be lady of honour on the death of Madame de Mazarin. They ordered their clerks and secretaries to investigate the brevets with a hope of finding some old claim, some shadowy survival, some promise of reversion in favour of no matter what lady, which they might set up with an appearance of precedent or legality to frustrate the establishment of Mesdames de La Tournelle and De Flavacourt at Versailles. Unluckily for the ministers, the Maréchale de Villars, in whose favour a clause was found in the brevet of the Duchesse de Villars, refused to enter into the little conspiracy, and would not, or dared not, in spite of the entreaties of her family, bar the road to the Demoiselles de Nesle. Repulsed in this first attempt, Maurepas and Fleury produced a letter from the Marquis de Tessé, reminding the Cardinal of a promise made three years before, which gave the place to a Madame de Saulx, whose candidature they supported by a written recommendation from the Queen.² During the course of these agitations, well-nigh desperate, but active and incessant on the part of the two ministers, Richelieu, by a manœuvre of the most adroit treachery, struck Madame de Mailly in the heart in order to have her ousted by her sister. Madame de Mailly had all the virtues of a dupe:

¹ *Fragments of the Memoirs of the Duchesse de Brancas.—Lettres de Lauraguais à Madame X. . . . Buisson, an x.*

² *Mémoires du Maréchal Duc de Richelieu.* 1793, vol. vi.

Richelieu knew it, and it was his point of departure. He insinuated himself into her favour, effaced the past, re-established himself in her good graces, lulled her credulity, weaned her confidence and faith to the undertakings of Madame de La Tournelle, appealed to her kindness, her charitable generosity, excited her desire to be agreeable to the King, offered her the expectation of a place in the household of the Dauphine, and, eventually, induced her to resign her own place of lady of the palace to the Queen ; this meant leaving the field open at once to the two sisters, to Madame de La Tournelle and Madame de Flavacourt. It was also depriving Madame de Mailly, in disgrace, of any retreat at court, of any refuge in office ; it was a means of ensuring her exile. In this odious comedy, Richelieu found an able assistant in D'Argenson, who made use of the very love of Madame de Mailly to invite her to the sacrifice, pointing out to her in the most touching language what would be the King's gratitude, and the new character, more constant and more elevated, of his attachment to a mistress capable of such devotion and such nobility of soul. It was in vain that Fleury met the plot by forbidding Madame de Mailly to send in her resignation ; in vain that Maurepas, with no mincing of the future, warned her that she would be driven out by her sister La Tournelle, if she gave up the place ; Madame de Mailly followed the advice of Richelieu and D'Argenson. She believed that by submission and self-sacrifice she would disarm the King and retain his waning affection. On Friday, the 21st of September 1742, Madame de Mailly presented Madame de La Tournelle and Madame de Flavacourt to the Queen, and Madame de La Tournelle took possession of the lodging of the Bishop of Rennes, which Richelieu obtained for her from the King.¹

Thus we see Madame de La Tournelle at last installed at court. Her party have but three things more to do,

¹ Fragment of the *Memoirs of the Duchesse de Brancas.* — *Lettres de Lauraguais.*

three victories to obtain : over Madame de Mailly, over the King, over Madame de La Tournelle herself. Madame de La Tournelle must be cured of a love that still burns ; the King must be induced to make the conquest of Madame de La Tournelle in person ; finally, Madame de Mailly must be dismissed from Versailles. The ambitions of Madame de La Tournelle, the pursuit, even the approach of favour, the intoxication and the temptations of the position of the King's mistress had not extinguished her lively and sincere feelings for the Duc d'Agenois. She had too much wit not to have thought very often of forgetting him ; but, nevertheless, she did not forget him. Richelieu came to her assistance. He sent the handsome duke, who was his nephew, to Languedoc, and exposed him to the advances of a pretty woman, posted up and trained by himself, seduced by the promise of a great position in Paris, and fired by the laurels to be won to the *amour-propre* of a woman of the provinces through the conquest of a D'Agenois. Her advances led to a correspondence, in which D'Agenois, thoroughly confident of secrecy and of Madame de La Tournelle's ignorance, let himself go at random, with the ease and gratitude of a man who finds some means of passing the time in the country. He gave vent to expressions and testimonies of love which, when brought to the notice of Madame de La Tournelle by the King, analysed, accentuated and commented on with a host of mocking gibes upon the handsome D'Agenois' constancy, detached her from a tender memory, and disengaged her without much trouble of a weakness which she had been light enough to turn into a habit.¹

And soon her only further thought of D'Agenois was that she might recover the letters she had written to him : "I always forget," she writes to Richelieu, "to speak to you of your nephew : I see that Broglio's army is about to

¹ *Mémoires du Duc de Richelieu.* 1793, vol. vi.—*Mémoires Historiques de M. de B—*. Jourdain, 1807, vol. ii.

join you, consequently, you will find yourselves together ; take him into your confidence on no matter whatever, of however little importance it may be. I know positively that he has never forgiven you and never will forgive you ; he may appear friendly to you, but have no confidence in it. I am grieved to have to write to you thus, but believe me, I know what I am saying, and you would be his dupe ; I saw it was your intention to relate to him everything that has passed, omitting nothing ; beware of that, I ask it of you as a favour. Of course, you may tell him that it was not you who had the conduct of the affair, and, especially, that you knew nothing of it but what the King told you, but, I pray you, refrain from all detail. I will tell you the truth : he has letters of mine which I should be mighty glad to recover before he comes to Paris, because I should not care for M. de Maurepas and his mother to peer into them, which might very well happen, they are that sort of people. Perhaps your nephew would not give them up except in a moment of pique ; at least the surest thing is that he should give them to you, or if you do not care to ask for them, M. le Prince de Conti might be so kind ; in that case you could send them back to me gradually, by couriers, always to my sister's address. Farewell, for as I hear the drum I would as lief end my letter.”¹

There was a task more difficult than that of arousing

¹ Unpublished autograph letter of the Duchesse de Châteauroux. We are indebted to our friend, M. Louis Passy, for the knowledge of the collection of autograph letters of Madame de Châteauroux which we publish here for the first time, letters so curious, not only for the biography of the mistress, but for the history of the reign of Louis XV. They are preserved in the Library of Rouen, in the Laber collection, under the number 5816, and the title : *Lettres Autographes secrètes et galantes de la Duchesse de Châteauroux et de Louis XV. au Duc de Richelieu (1743-1744)*. Some of these letters of Madame de Châteauroux bear her arms, the three mallets of the Mailly-Nesles, and the three towers of the Duchy of Châteauroux under the ducal cloak ; one is sealed with a head of Socrates. Almost all are written on a very smooth Holland paper whose water-mark is the device : *Pro patria, or, Honi soit qui mal y pense.*

the jealousy of Madame de La Tournelle and concentrating all her passions on her ambition. It was that of inducing the King, that shy and indolent King, so hostile to any kind of enterprise, accustomed to be served in his amours as in everything else, spoiled by victories that had been prepared and ready-made conquests, accustomed to the recognition of the divine right of his pleasure, to adoration as well as complaisance—of inducing him to take the trouble of falling in love, the tedium of making himself pleasant, to play that part of a man, and a man in love, which had been played by François I., Henri IV. and Louis XIV. And since it was his wish to possess a proud and capricious woman, too elevated or too adroit to let herself be put in the master's bed by the hands of a minister, he was bound to court her and win her by the efforts and attentions of that novitiate of love whose homage and proof every mistress exacts. But hardly had he embarked on this unwonted task before Louis XV. lost patience. The two letters which he had written, on Richelieu's advice, having remained unanswered, he grew indignant, wished to cease writing, wreaked his irritation on Madame de Mailly, and transferred his desires to women, chosen, without his knowledge, by Maurepas' party, which sought to entice him for the moment into an intrigue with the D'Angeville; passing from caprice to caprice, sulking with the love to which he could not submit, but which filled his heart, devoured by impatience, torments and fires of which he had been ignorant, and which always brought back to Madame de La Tournelle a humbler lover in a more amorous King.

It is easy to imagine the life and the sufferings of the wretched De Mailly, in the midst of this fever of the King, during his combats and revolts, side by side with that passion irritated by a resistance which astonished him, and of which, with her woman's nerves and sensibility, she felt every heart-beat, each reaction, each return. It was a bitter chalice that she drank to the last

drop. No sorrow, no humiliation was lacking in this death-struggle of love, the most grievous, perhaps, which a King's mistress has ever expiated. The King spared Madame de Mailly nothing. He did not even spare her those harsh words which snap the bonds of the most vulgar *liaisons*. Weary of his chains, and without strength to break them, Louis XV. avenged himself on her for his own impatience and irresolution, with all the cruelty of the weakness to which he was still secretly driven by Madame de La Tournelle. Versailles and Choisy re-echoed with those pitiless words, the brutality of which is the lash to a woman's heart; and as poor De Mailly was obstinately set on swallowing insults, as she wished to love and forgive to the end, as she remained, hugging the past, hanging on to a last illusion, the despair and patience of her love, after having worn out the pity, goaded the lassitude of the King, who conceived a hatred of her. The little suppers went on; but they were sombre, almost funereal. Into their silence a word would drop from the King which made Madame de Mailly burst into tears. The King kept her aloof, repulsed her from him, seeking pretexts to be rid of her proximity. On the 2nd of November 1742, he took back from her her small apartment near the Cabinets, commanding her to give it up to Madame de Flavacourt, and telling her she could remove her furniture where she liked; but the King's hopes were frustrated; Madame de Mailly did not consider herself dismissed; and in order to postpone her disgrace she devised caresses, movements, outbursts so sincere and touching that the King had not the courage of his determination, and revoked the order. He was seized with an instant's remorse and shame for the violence which had been in excess of his character and had even passed the bounds of the ordinary man of breeding. Madame de Mailly thought she had recovered, if not the King's love, at least his charity and indulgence, when, on the day following, the King came to tell her that he was madly in love with Madame de La Tournelle, that she

would soon become his mistress, and that, consequently, he could no longer be her lover.”¹ At this, Madame de Mailly, at the end of her strength, at the end of her courage, falling on her knees in the supreme degradation of her love, promised that she would shut her eyes, would permit, endure everything, asking only the favour of being allowed to stay on, as she might have asked for the strength to live. The master answered: “*You must go away this very day.*” Madame de Mailly cringed at his feet, she implored, prolonged the interview, and relied in her weakness on miserable pretexts, on all the petty delays of a love that has been condemned, in order to postpone her departure. She finished by appealing to the King’s sense of dignity, assuring him that if he would consent to keep her, she would draw from her love the courage to hide from his subjects this fresh amour which was likely to detract from their respect. And the King, shaken by her tears, by the humility of her grief, in spite of the undertakings he had given to Madame de La Tournelle, granted a few days’ respite to Madame de Mailly.²

Richelieu, who, in these last days, had let things go, left time to act, and this love on which he brought such ruin to follow the fatal and precipitate course of the loves that cease, and this gradual breach with its daily alienation, its growing cruelties envenomed by long impatience, to forbid any return to the two lovers,—Richelieu began to grow anxious owing to Madame de La Tournelle’s calmness, her scant haste and indolence in taking up her post as mistress and winning the King. The schemes and efforts of the ministers, the sympathy excited by Madame de Mailly’s despair, the almost unanimous murmur of emotion at court, the friendships which grouped themselves in a party round this interesting disgrace, determined Richelieu to lend a hand again to Madame de La Tournelle’s affairs and hasten the *dénouement*. He obtained Madame de La

¹ *Mémoires du Maréchal Duc de Richelieu.* 1793, vol. vi.

² *Ibid.*

Tournelle's promise that she would admit the King to her presence in the middle of the night. This rendezvous given and accepted, Richelieu had brought everything to a conclusion. He sought out Madame de Mailly, and professing to be deeply grieved, and concerned only with her since it had been impossible for her to love the King any longer, painted to her in the liveliest colours the duty she owed to herself, the regard for her glory, the unworthiness of the King's heart, that King who was deserting her and whom she would do well to renounce. In conclusion, he offered to escort her when she would, to Paris. Thus Richelieu took the responsibility for her dismissal on himself and effaced the person of the King. "*My sacrifices are finished,*" said Madame de Mailly, "*it will be my death, but I will be in Paris to-night.*"

Thereupon Richelieu repaired to the King, and without giving him more time in which to reflect or cool down than he had given Madame de Mailly for resistance, he informed him of the departure of Madame de Mailly and the rendezvous granted by Madame de La Tournelle. He next spoke to him of the need of secrecy, of the great court-yards to be crossed, Maurepas' spies to be eluded, the necessary disguise with which he would provide him. A little after midnight, the King and Richelieu go into hiding, and put on large perruques such as doctors wear, with black garments and cloaks. Embarrassment was prevented by surprise, and the romantic, almost comic side of this first interview redeemed its coldness. The King left Madame de La Tournelle more involved than ever, finding in such a courtship a piquant side, a novelty and a note of adventure which delighted him like a child.¹

Madame de Mailly was in Paris; and with her eyes still unopened, ever confident, obstinately set on her illusions and her victim's part, continuing to deliver herself into her enemies' hands, she went to invoke the

¹ Fragment of the *Memoirs of the Duchesse de Brancas*.—*Lettres de Lauraguais.*

advice of D'Argenson. D'Argenson, realising the full importance of keeping her away from Versailles, and inducing her to accept exile, hypocritically repeated to her what false friends had said of old to Madame de Montespan: the King's mind was prejudiced against her, and her retirement could not fail to bring him back. On the 10th of November, Madame de Mailly went to receive the King's final orders, perhaps, in despite of the counsels of D'Argenson, to make one last effort. What took place at this last interview? No witnesses, no book, no letter tell of it. Nothing speaks to the sorrow of it. Only, the courtiers in waiting in the antechamber saw Madame de Mailly came out with her breast heaving, her eyes suffused in tears, desperate, almost mad, walking as one who neither sees nor hears. Behind her came the King, who followed her, soothing and supporting her with consolations, softly-uttered words, until the final one into which his voice threw the irony of a last vengeance and the sigh of a vast relief: "*Until Monday, at Choisy, Madame la Comtesse . . . until Monday, I hope you will not keep me waiting.*"

That Monday was the Monday, as the wretched woman knew, on which the loves of her sister and her lover were to know their first night in the bed of blue silk which it had taken her long years to weave, believing that she wove it for a love that was to be eternal.¹

Madame de La Tournelle, on the dismissal of her sister, wrote to Richelieu: ". . . I have shown the King your letters which diverted him; he has assured me that he did not tell Madame de Mailly that it was you who managed the business, but simply that he had told you of the fact, and that you had accompanied him to my apartment. You will quite see the stories that will be made about it; you have only to maintain stoutly that you knew nothing about it until it was very much advanced; that is also the proper thing for me. I am un-

¹ *Mémoires du Maréchal Duc de Richelieu.*

willing to appear as though I had sought this advantage, nor my friends for me—the more so in that neither they nor I had any thought of it. . . . Doubtless, Meuse will have informed you of the trouble I had in ousting Madame de Mailly; at last I obtained a mandate to the effect that she was not to return until she was sent for. Perhaps you think that the affair is settled? Not at all; it seems he is overcome with grief, and I do not get a letter from him in which he does not speak of her, and ask me to make her return, and say that *he will not approach her*, but that he begs me to let him see her occasionally: I have this moment received one, wherein he tells me that if I refuse him, I shall soon be rid of himself as well as of her; implying, apparently, that the two of them will die of grief. As it would be mighty inconvenient for me to have her here, *I mean to hold out*. As *I have pledged myself to nothing*, for which, I confess to you, I am devoutly grateful,¹ he shall decide between her and me. . . . I

¹ There is a letter from Madame de La Tournelle, doubtless but little posterior to the above, in which she expresses the same sentiment:

“ VERSAILLES, Tuesday, three of the morning.

“ I am not surprised at your anger, my dear uncle, for I expected it; I am not, however, over-convinced of its good sense, I do not see where the foolishness comes in in my frankly refusing the visit. The only thing which might make me regret it is if it should increase his longing for her. That is all my fear, the letter you sent me is a fine—too fine an one, I shall not write it, because he has expressly ordered me to await his return, and then it would seem like too great eagerness which, in truth, I should be loath to show. Try to come and see me, it is absolutely necessary. Good-night, I shall tell you no more, for I am so sleepy that I can hardly hold my pen; I am yet wide enough awake to see that you are too mad-cap to be at large, the jest is that you are mighty astonished that other folk are not like you; as for me, I confess I congratulate myself, and am as pleased as possible that I do not treat the matter as hotly as you do, and I think I am right. Calm yourself, dear uncle, everything will come right, but not in the way you would have it; I am very sorry for it, but I find it impossible. Farewell, dear uncle, I deserve a little of your friendship considering the opinion I have of you.

“ Above all, do not appear to know anything, for he recommends me the most absolute secrecy.” (*Autograph Correspondence—secret and gallant—of the Duchesse de Châteauroux and Louis XV. with the Duc de Richelieu, 1743-1744, preserved in the Bibliothèque de Rouen, collection Léber, No. 5816.*)

foresee, my dear uncle, that all this will cause me much annoyance. During the Cardinal's life-time, I shall be able to do nothing that I want to do. This has given me a desire to attach the old rogue to my interests by going to see him. The appearance of trusting him might, perhaps, win him over to me. . . . This is worth reflection. . . . You can imagine how busy everyone is with all this, and how all eyes are turned on the King and myself. . . . As for the Queen, you can guess whether she looks awry at me ; that is all in the game. . . . I must tell you what ladies are to go to Choisy : Mademoiselle de La Roche-sur-Yon, Mesdames De Luynes, De Chevreuse, D'Antin, De Flavacourt, and your humble servant. He did not even dare to go to Choisy, it was I who told him that it was my wish. No one will occupy Madame de Mailly's apartment ; I shall occupy the one which is known as yours—that is to say, if M. Dubordaye has wit enough, for the King will never mention it. . . . He has written to tell you that *everything was over between us*, for he told me in his letter of this morning to deceive you, because he did not wish you to believe more than is the case. It is true that when he wrote to you, he was counting on its happening this evening ; but I have raised *certain obstacles in the execution*, which I do not regret.”¹

This letter is Madame de La Tournelle in her entirety, and history offers few such documents, in which a woman has so depicted herself, in such crude colours and nudity. No portrait is to be compared with such a confession : it is the woman herself with the cynicism and frivolity of her hardness, her shameless and cold-blooded ingratitude, her determination of mind and heart. It is as though she drives her sister out by the two shoulders with those words which have the coarse energy of the lower orders. And what an ease in her implacability, just as in her hardness ! Nothing troubles her, nothing touches her, not even the amazing grief aroused in selfishness, the tears of Louis XV.! In

¹ Catalogue of Autographs taken from the cabinet of M. A. Martin, 1842.

the midst of all that she has broken, of the tears and lamentations and deaths surrounding her, she reasons, calculates, weaves her schemes, with a lack of feeling which is fearful in its sincerity. "I mean to hold out. ^{Tempo} I have raised certain obstacles in the execution which I do not regret," are sentences which give all her measure, reflect her whole character. We see her calculating with herself upon her fall, seeking in advance to obtain the advantages which are the price of a resistance. She means to obtain much before she yields anything : it is a business affair in which she requires guarantees. It does not suit her to commence, like Madame de Mailly, to save the King's private expenses by economy, to soil her hands by picking up the few louis which had rewarded the first rendezvous of her sister,¹ to hire her ornaments as she did, and have recourse like her to the purse of Villars or Luxembourg.² Nor does she desire that like her sister she should be compelled, after years of love and favour, to go and borrow from her neighbours the flambeaux and silver counters³ for the royal visits ; and she requires quite a different generosity from that inscribed upon the Secret Register of Louis XV. : *For the people of Madame la Comtesse de Mailly, to be distributed by M. le Prince de Tigry, 2000 livres* ; and when Madame de Mailly dies : *Debts of Madame la Comtesse de Mailly, annuity 41,500 livres.* Moreover, apart from her money-needs, Madame de La Tournelle cherishes loftier ambitions : her pride must participate in her love. There would be the humiliation of mystery for her in a surreptitious connection, a scandal hidden and out of sight. She means to stand out and glitter in all the glory of a favourite. These wishes, these conditions, Madame de La Tournelle was not long in conveying to the King. She gave him to understand that

¹ *Mémoires du Marquis d'Argenson.* Jannet, 1857, vol. ii.—*Chronique du Règne de Louis XV.—Revue Rétrospective.* 1834, vol. v.

² *Mémoires du Duc de Luynes.* Vol. iii.

³ *Ibid.*

Madame de Mailly's dismissal was not sufficient for her ; that she wished to be mistress in title on the footing of the Montespan ; she was not inclined, like Madame de Mailly, to sup and sleep clandestinely in the little apartments ; she required a well-appointed house, an apartment in which she could receive the King openly, the power, when she needed money, of drawing upon the royal treasury. She finally stipulated that at the end of the year she was to have her patent of Duchess authenticated by the Parliament, and that if she became with child, her confinement should be public and her child legitimatised.¹

The pettiest vanities of a woman were at the bottom of the ambitions, so vast, so excessive, so insolent, of Madame de La Tournelle ; and in that furious desire for elevation, that imperious demand for the title of Duchess, there was an impatient wish to be avenged on Maurepas, to humble his wife and punish the minister who had endeavoured unceasingly to thwart her fortune and who obstinately refused to forget her starting-point and origins, by crushing him completely. And already, with the assistance of Richelieu, she was paving the way and coming nearer to the ducal coronet by promoting the marriage of one of her sisters, entirely devoted to her interests—the marriage of Mademoiselle de Montcarvel with the Duc de Lauraguais, which was to bring a ducal precedent into the family.

It was much to expect, much to exact, from a King but little used to the prodigality of love, and kept so tightly in hand by the Cardinal ; and the character of the King, timid and nervous of public opinion, sombre and shrinking from any step which might compromise him personally, might well have shaken the self-confidence of Madame de La Tournelle. But all that abated her pretensions no whit ; she counted on the influence of love upon the King to destroy his spirit of economy, his worldly respect and his scruples. In the meanwhile, she feigned indifference ;

¹ *Mémoires du Marquis d'Argenson.* Jannet, 1857, vol. ii.

later, when that same was stale, she made a pretence of being reconciled to the Duc d'Agenois, saying that the intercepted letters testified to no more than a caprice, and that she saw in them no proof of her infidelity to him. She tantalised, at once rebuffed and excited the King by the most adroit comedies and those coquettresses which are the strength of her sex, assuring him that she would be delighted if he would turn his attention to other ladies, but, for all that, never ceasing to overwhelm and importune him, through the hints and indiscretions of her friends, with her ambitions, her wishes, her conditions.

At the foot of the staircase of Versailles, Madame de Mailly found a court carriage which conveyed her to Paris, to the Hôtel de Toulouse, belonging to the Noailles. The King sent for this carriage immediately, being unwilling that Madame de Noailles should retain of his favour even the carriage which had completed her disgrace. The Noailles had virtue or wit enough to be faithful to their friends. They were large in their hospitality, gave a suite of seven rooms in their hôtel to the homeless favourite, who, but for their kindness, would not have been able to escape from the ill-treatment of her husband or, maybe, find a shelter ; and through all the first period of her grief the Maréchale de Noailles was at Madame de Mailly's bedside. Her despair was terrible, the trouble of her heart refused consolation, begged for solitude, found vent every moment in cries for Louis XV. The Curé of Saint-Sulpice was unable to calm the suffering woman. Those who were around her trembled for her reason, for her life ; they were afraid lest in the violence and delirium of some outburst she should be tempted to lay hands upon herself. These fits were succeeded by agitation, a fever of projects, fitful and fleeting desires, caprices, depressions. She wished to start for court, prepared to rise, and when the carriage was ready, burst into tears and fell back upon her bed. She summoned her old friends, entreated their advice, but listened to her grief alone. She spent her time in reading

over and over again the letters which the King used to send her daily. She questioned each sentence, each word ; she sought and chased hope in them, one day in despair, foreseeing an eternal exile, the next, believing her ordeal over and the King's love regained.¹ These last hopes which bound Madame de Mailly to life were not entirely illusions. Madame de La Tournelle's letter shows us that the King's heart had felt the wrench of the rupture after it was effected, and that he had rather separated than detached himself from Madame de Mailly by those harsh and brutal manners, with which he appears to have been forcibly disturbed in his habits. Piqued by the coldness of Madame de La Tournelle, disgusted and humiliated by her resistance, he harked back with remorseful gratitude to the gentle and tractable De Mailly. Separation awoke in him the love which he had thought dead ; and a thousand memories surged up of that past which was so near, and of which all his surroundings bore the impress and the regret. For the first time, he seemed to suffer from solitude. The indolence of his mind conspired with the indolence of his heart to induce regret for the banished mistress. He was no less preoccupied by the difficulties than by the emotions of his new love, and the struggle he had to maintain with the Cardinal caused him as much embarrassment as the broken bonds which still hampered him. The King had thought to waive all the objections of the Cardinal by these words, "that in entrusting him with the management of affairs *he had no intention of giving him any right over his person*";² but Fleury, humiliated and enraged by Richelieu's victory, alarmed at the new and almost monstrous example of scandal which was about to be given from the height of the throne to the whole kingdom, implored the King to carry things no

¹ Manuscript notes, 1742, belonging to the Marquis de Flers and communicated by him. In these notes I found an account of the debts attributed to Madame de Mailly, debts amounting to a million, of which 300,000 livres were due to the farmers-general of the posts ; 40,000 to Duchapt, the milliner ; 100,000 to a mercer, etc.

² *Mémoires Historiques de M. de B.*—. Jourdain, 1807, vol. ii.

further with Madame de La Tournelle. He appealed to all his religious sentiments, he spoke in the strongest terms to his imagination, he sowed the seeds of uneasiness in his conscience,¹ and so many were the King's fluctuations betwixt the different emotions which swayed him, so great was his confusion and hesitation, that the courtiers and the public knew not from one moment to the other from which remorse he would free himself, whether he would return to Madame de Mailly or to God.

Madame de La Tournelle still maintained an attitude of calm. She seemed, as it were, indifferent, in her serene assurance of victory. She made preparations for the visit to Choisy which she had exacted from the King. She tasted in anticipation the glory and satisfaction of it. She ordered the *mise-en-scène* and the scandal. She exacted an escort of the noblest names in France. The presence of a princess of the blood, Mademoiselle de La Roche-sur-Yon, was not enough for her; the new favourite wished also to obtain for the consecration of her installation, the protection and the patronage of the Duchesse de Luynes' virtue; but the Duchesse evaded the proposal, and when, at a supper, the King told the Duc that he had invited Madame la Duchesse to go to Choisy, M. de Luynes, forgetful of the blue ribbon he had solicited for so long, only answered with a profound bow, sought out Meuse, and begged him to inform the King of the grief with which he refused. This was, perhaps the only protest from the court. Anxiety to oblige, and a dread of being compromised, did not long leave vacant the place which Madame de Luynes had refused. Many clamoured for the honour, and on Monday, the 12th of November, the King set off for Choisy, accompanied by Mademoiselle de la Roche-sur-Yon, Madame de Flavacourt, Madame d'Antin, and other ladies, the Duc de Villeroi and the Prince de Soubise. Madame de La Tournelle sat by the King's side in the royal barge. The journey was by no

¹ *Chronique du Règne de Louis XV. Revue Rétrospective*, vol. v.

means gay. Perhaps Madame de La Tournelle was in one of those frames of mind in which old grudges come back to one and are embittered. Was she uneasy at the King's letters to Madame de Mailly? Full of the Des Luynes refusal? Exasperated by the mocking allusions of the Queen, and the contemptuous fashion in which she submitted to her visits, feigning to fall asleep? Or was it rather part of her plan to assume airs of ill-humour, and, at the point where she stood, to goad the King on in order to subdue him thoroughly? The supper was gloomy, tedious, depressed by the cloud which never left the brow of Madame de La Tournelle. She refused to play with the King at *cavagnol*, deeming that the King had offered her the cards coldly;¹ and in the evening she was heard, being displeased with the vastness of her room, asking a lady to change apartments with her. But the lady was afraid of some trick; she answered that Choisy was not her own house, and that she could only give up her apartment by order of the King. Madame de La Tournelle then barricaded herself in her room, and feigning sleep, although she was wide-awake and listening keenly allowed the King to scratch for a long time at her door; but did not open it. Madame de La Tournelle was aware of all she gained by such resistance. By thwarting, she exasperated the senses of the King, who lost flesh, was ravaged, and, in time, ill with passion.² She held him bound and fettered with a to-morrow she in turns offered and withheld from him, and out of that Louis XV., unsatisfied and mad with longing, formed the docile and subservient lover she needed. The King returned Madame de Mailly's letters unopened, and gave orders that, in future, they were not to be delivered to him. He came near to abusing the Comtesse de Toulouse, who sought to revive his sentiments towards Madame de Mailly,³ and amid all the licence of that time, nothing lit up a royal anger in

¹ *Mémoires du Maréchal Duc de Richelieu.* Vol. vi.

² *Chronique du Règne de Louis XV.* *Revue Rétrospective.* 1834, vol. vi.

³ *Ibid.*

him but the freedom of the songs—songs handed to him by the Cardinal—the hooting of which bitterly annoyed Madame de La Tournelle.

Beaten at each encounter with Madame de La Tournelle, Maurepas had invoked his muse ; he had called song to his aid ; and with his fertile invention, at home in this field which was his own, flinging out daily some fresh satire upon the family and race of the De Nesles, exciting public opinion with broad and lively couplets, recovering the vein of the *Ménippées* and the *Mazarinades*, he made of laughter and refrain a power and an arm already redoubtable ;—it was the childhood, as it were, and the budding adolescence of the liberty of the press. Strange period, in which, in our merry country, the war against royalty originated and the wind of revolution sprung up in a portfolio of frivolous verses scattered by a minister ! Rendered bold by his resentment, sustained by his vogue, aided by his wife, for whom a mind fashioned in the image of her husband's, and as lacking as his in charity, had earned the nickname of Madame Vinegar,¹ Maurepas overwhelmed the favourite and forewarned the King with a thousand light and volatile ironies which flew from the suppers of Versailles to the suppers of Paris, and, echoed everywhere by the world of fashion, formed a mocking chorus to his new amour. It was, as it were, a daily journal, hiding its sting beneath the innocence of its jesting, impregnable, and disarming measures of repression as a witticism disarms anger, sowing the seeds of destruction everywhere, and, by exhibiting the man within the King and the lover within the man to the idle and the discontented, to curiosity and idealism, teaching the people to despise their princes, princes even to despise their people. But Maurepas did not see so far ahead, he revelled in his actual success and the annoyance of Madame de La Tournelle, who, in her desire to jest at satire, sang the abominable songs at Choisy, with a laugh upon her lips although her heart was bleeding. And he

¹ *Mémoires du Maréchal Duc de Richelieu.*

gave himself no rest, improvised *pasquinade* after *pasquinade*, caring little whether he were suspected, trusting largely to the need the King had of him and his manner of working—rendering work so light, so easy, a lesson which required the pupil neither to sacrifice his time nor draw upon his reflection.

But, against Maurepas' expectation, the public success of these songs hastened Madame de La Tournelle's victory. Their daily sting, by irritating the King, accustomed him to unpopularity, and had the unexpected result of deciding him to brave everything and bargain no further with his love. The Cardinal was almost dismissed. Madame de Mailly's disgrace was definitely settled by a fixed position, the grant of a small sum for the debts, which were what was left of her favour, a lodging in the Luxembourg. The King submitted to Madame de La Tournelle's conditions ; and during a sojourn at Choisy, between the end of November and the early days of December 1742, the triumphant favourite showed the court the King's gold snuff-box, which he had left under her pillow.¹

By the end of December, Madame de La Tournelle was installed at Versailles in the favourite's apartment. And it was from there that it amused her to write, under the eyes of Louis XV., the chronicles of the little apartments which conveyed to Richelieu, when he was with the army, the news and petty gossip of the court, the witticism of the day, and the assurance of the friendship of the mistress of his King.

“ VERSAILLES, the 28th of December.

“ Good-morrow, uncle dear ; I am truly delighted to know that you were well : to complete my joy I should need to have you here, for really I am greatly tired of not seeing you. It seems to me you are mighty curious, for you ask me a heap of questions. I think that the best I can do to please you is to answer them : I am quite satisfied with my new apartment, and spend very pleasant

¹ *Mémoires du Maréchal Duc de Richelieu.* Vol. vi.

days in it ; as for what is thought of me there, it is not for me to say ; I will put the question on your behalf, we shall see what the answer will be. I have eaten your trout, my company found it excellent and drank to your health. I do not yet know when my brother-in-law that is to be, will arrive, but I am already wishful it was all over ; the father-in-law has given Montcarvel his St Esprit in diamonds, and the mother-in-law a fine casket : they do things in the finest way, as you see ; I could not say enough of their politeness to me and my sister. I do not know what you mean about the courier of M. de Broglie. All that is certain is that they are going into their winter quarters. I read your letter to him to whom you wish such happiness and he is greatly obliged to you for it ; you will have heard his news ; there is, perhaps, one matter in it which may have made you uneasy owing to the kindness, I flatter myself, you have for your niece, but it is nothing ; I can better explain the affair to you when you return : besides, all is the same as before you left. I always forget to congratulate you on your marriage with Mademoiselle Chauvelin. It is very naughty of you to have told me nothing about it ; they have no need to seek to make trouble between you and me, you do it of yourself. I must, however, do them this justice, they have not even tried, I think it is because they see the uselessness of it ; and they are very right, for whatever happens you may count, dear uncle, on my sincere and tender friendship. I would like to give you proofs of it, it would be assuredly with all my heart. Madame de Chevreux is still very sick, and Fargy is dead. The King has a cold, but it is going on well ; the Queen grows thinner every day, she will soon be all bones. That is all the fine news I have of the court, for no doubt you know that the hen¹ has laid an egg ; Madame de Nivernois has been brought to bed of a daughter."²

¹ Madame de Flavacourt.

² Autograph Letter of the Duchesse de Châteauroux. Bibliothèque de Rouen.

Sometimes it was the master himself who took up the pen, and told his favourite of what the King was doing, of how the *Princess* fared, intermingling his news with irony or reflections, of a singular detachment, upon the generals of his armies. ". . . I am grieved," he writes, "that your general is sick, bodily and mentally; as far as the body is concerned, everything wears out: you are less aware of this than others, but it is none the less true." Then he passes the pen to Madame de La Tournelle, who writes on the same sheet: "I have not time to write to you at greater length, dear uncle, because the courier is about to start; your news is fiendish, and has cast a gloom over me all day, and I do not know what it will be like this night. I will not reply to all the matters in your letter, because it was not to me; if the King was willing, he would better acquit himself, give you more pleasure and me as well. Good-night."

And on the little space remaining, the King puts down this concise witticism which reads like the conclusion of a chapter of the *Sofa*.

"Since it will give pleasure to the *Princess*, I will tell you, then, that I wish you good-night, and that . . . good-bye."¹

With this *liaison*, a new existence opened for the King. Delivered from the tutelage of the Cardinal, the restraint imposed upon his tastes and pleasures, retaining nothing from his counsels but a tendency towards economy, he flung himself into all the raptures of satisfied love, into all the licence and all the indolence of keen passion and soft sensuality. It was the furious escapades and the wild bachelor existence of a young man reared by a priest, who, on arriving at the epoch when his appetites are at their height and his senses at their maturity, breaks away from the trammels of his youth. Indifferent to

¹ Autograph Letter of Louis XV. and Madame de Châteauroux. Bibliothèque de Rouen.

France, to its victories or reverses, shirking the councils, he dived deeply and forgot himself in debauches of drink and the libertinage of good cheer. Neither Prague nor Bavaria nor the army entered his head, which was empty through his excesses, in which his thought glided from a trout sent him by Richelieu from the Lake of Geneva to some scurvy anecdote served up hot. There had been fresh promotions in the ranks of the King's boon companions, and the old company of the little supper-parties was augmented by convivial guests, affranchised as the King was from all dread of the Cardinal, who gave a freer attitude to these foregatherings, a livelier tone to the conversation.

The Duc d'Ayen, the Comte de Noailles, Meuse, Luxembourg, Villeroy, and Coigny were reinforced by that wild and witty company which loved a life of enjoyment and ready-made amours: Guerchy, the Duc de Fitzjames, the Marquis de Gontaut, the Duc d'Aumont, Soubise, Boufflers, and their master, the grand-master of pleasure: Richelieu. Then there was a whole squadron of titled women, of women in office, eager to form a court, and, as it were, a household, round the favourite: Mademoiselle de Charolois, restored to favour, the Princesse de Conti, Mademoiselle de La Roche-sur-Yon, and that Duchesse, the Duchesse de Chevreuse who, deviating from the noble attitude and fine example of her family, cloaked a complaisance for which she blushed, beneath the pretext of an old convent friendship with Madame de La Tournelle; and Madame d'Antin and Madame de Bellefond, a charming and fascinating company of pretty women and amiable sparks which surrounded the King at the little supper-parties, at the hunting expeditions, in all his excursions; the intimates of Choisy, of that holiday court, to paint which one would need the flippant brushes of a Beaudoin, where each morning the King awakened the women, playfully mocking at their coquetry or their matutinal modesty, and making thus, as he passed

from room to room, from one lace-pillow to another, what was called the *King's round*.¹

Madame de La Tournelle cleverly manœuvred her favour. In order to establish and extend it she made use of two methods, inspired, like her whole conduct, by a deep and accurate knowledge of the King's character. The first was an affectation of silence upon affairs of state, and an indifferent abstention from those sorts of matters carried to such a point that it astonished the King as the most unwonted characteristic of a mistress.² It was thus that Madame de La Tournelle forced the King to speak to her first of them, and by submitting to be consulted, requiring to be entreated before she would listen or give her opinion, she made such a comedy of her discretion that it was Louis XV. himself who installed her in the counsel and direction of his kingly will, Louis XV., that distrustful master who had not even forgiven Mailly and Vintimille for their inquisitiveness as to secrets of State. Next, Madame de La Tournelle had made a clever concession to the King's spirit of economy, which she could only look to time and the force of habit to alter. Her pride, moreover, made it easy for her to appear more desirous of the honours of favour than of its profits. Entirely concentrated upon the erection of a duchy in her favour, confining her present demands to that, and absorbing in that her momentary ambitions, she waited patiently for the King to be generous, for the house he had promised her, and was only mildly indignant that she was compelled to have recourse to the hostelry in order to receive the King and his friends. She avoided the compromising bargains, abstained from the perquisites, through which Maurepas, who was watching her, hoped to catch her. When in want of money she refrained from asking for it; she openly forbade her friends to ask

¹ *Mémoires du Duc de Luynes.* Vol. iii.

² *Mémoires du Marquis d'Argenson.* Jannet, 1857, vol. ii.

it for her; and this moderation, the necessity of which she recognised, advanced her in the King's confidence almost as much as her discretion. And how could Louis XV. have maintained his fears and his defences in a *liaison* which threatened so little, which had, in addition to the merit of not infringing upon the State, the unexpected modesty of asking so little from the treasury?

Again, the whole conduct of Madame de La Tournelle, inspired in her before she came into favour, as had been the case with Madame de Vintimille, by an intuition into the King's character, was now founded on a profound analysis and studied experience of that character. She had the art to enter into it, to divine his sympathies and antipathies for individuals, the wit to base her whole policy on those personal sentiments which were so potent, so keen, so persistent in Louis XV. The men whom Madame de Mailly and Madame de Vintimille had supported, in despite of the King's secret prejudices, hoping to see their amours live long and prosper beneath the shelter of their glory, their genius, their great dreams, their felicitous projects,—these men were abandoned by Madame de La Tournelle for the sake of men less brilliant but acceptable to the King. It was thus that she abandoned Belleville, that man of many projects, who lived in a fever, and whose fever disturbed and alarmed the King's indolence; it was thus that she abandoned Chauvelin, whose great fault was that the serious party at court went with him, a fact which alarmed the King. She sacrificed Tencin to the King's repugnance for his intrigues. She supported Orry, the controller-general—that is to say, the minister of finance. She supported D'Argenson, who, going much into society and frequenting the *salons*, brought her its suffrages, and counterbalanced Maurepas on the very territory of his own influence and power. She supported the De Noailles, in spite of their close relations with her sister De Mailly,

in spite of the acquaintance and friendship of the women of the family with Maurepas, because she knew that the De Noailles had had the King's confidence and friendship since his childhood, and that her ambitions, which soared far higher than the ambitions of her sisters, suffered no detriment from the personality of the Maréchal de Noailles. To these tactics of never thwarting the King, and of following his preferences, she joined the strength and the address to hide her influence from the ministers, and to dissimulate from them all that she knew, all the power that was already hers, appearing humble and ignorant in their presence, listening to them, consulting them, fawning upon their credit as though she respected or needed it. As for the King's person, she continued to retain it in her possession by the tyranny of her heartless coquetry and her pitiless caprices. She spared him no one of those torments and excitations with which venal mistresses keep love panting. Sometimes she showed a coldness which made the King afraid of being left; sometimes, womanly exigencies, as imperious and obstinate as the wilfulness of a child; then fits of anger, of jealousy, a succession of indifferences and outbursts, sulks, and rages which left the King no peace, and agitated him ceaselessly. She brought reluctance into the very act of possession, and even left her royal lover to knock at her door. In short, she irritated with all sorts of difficulties and changing moods the love which she wished to preserve from sinking into habit, and to keep ever on the alert; and she daily obtained further hold over the unoccupied mind of the King, filling it with her changing humours, cheering or depressing it, hourly renewing the atmosphere of his thoughts, keeping him close to her by the sway and the charm of her inconstancy and mobility. In time, she persuaded him to assist at her toilette, and from the arm-chair placed near her bath he conversed, through the open door, with the court, which was stationed in the adjoining

room. On coming out of her bath the favourite went to bed, where she dined, queening it already like a youthful Maintenon, the King seated at her side, the court drawn up before her.¹

Madame de La Tournelle had two sisters with her who helped her to keep the King amused. Free from jealousy, and anxious above all to distract her lover, she let him divert himself with the malice and mad-cap wit of her sister, Madame de Lauraguais, whom the King called the *Rue des Mauvaises Paroles*; she allowed him to be amused by the *naïveté* and childishness of another of her sisters, Madame de Flavacourt, whose shyness and tremors, terrors and girlish manners had won her the nickname of *the Hen*. Not without reason she was confident in the superiority of her beauty, which the heavy and vulgar graces, the robust and healthy charms of Madame de Lauraguais set off so well, and which she still knew, like Madame de Mailly, how to embellish and ennable by grand apparel, which gave her an almost royal majesty. She ravished the eye with her skin of dazzling whiteness, her elegant carriage, her free gestures, the enchanting glance of her big blue eyes—a gaze of which the cunning was veiled by sentiment — by the smile of a child, moist lips, a bosom surging, heaving, ever agitated by the flux and reflux of life, by that physiognomy at once passionate and mutinous, ardent and malicious,² whose youth and gentle glamour Nattier has endeavoured to immortalise in the Allegory of the Day-break.³

This beauty of Madame de La Tournelle, her never-failing merriment, her mild and playful wit, that delicate irony which was so successful in raising a smile on the

¹ *Mémoires du Maréchal Duc de Richelieu.* Vol. i.

² *Mémoires Historiques de M. de B—.* Jourdain, 1807.—*Fragment des Mémoires de la Duchesse de Brancas. Lettres de Lauraguais.* Buisson, an x.—*Mémoires du Maréchal Duc de Richelieu.* Vol. vi.

³ *Mémoires inédits sur la Vie et les Ouvrages des Membres de l'Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture,* 1854. Vol. ii.

King's face—in short, her infinitely skilful treatment of him, so opposed to the melancholy and tearful affection, the resignation and jealousy of Madame de Mailly—soon overcame the last resistance of the King and even triumphed over his character. The King, deserting his spirit of economy, resolved to give her a household, to buy her diamonds and horses : Madame de La Tournelle had taught Louis XV. to pay for love royally. The new favourite's ascendancy resisted all attacks. In vain did Maurepas, with an infuriated tenacity which checks could neither discourage nor subdue, intercept the letters of the active correspondence that was carried on between Richelieu and Madame de La Tournelle, and show the King the programme of political conduct dictated by the duke to the favourite ; he could do no more than avert disgrace and cling desperately to the ministry from which he was falling. By these communications, by the suspicions he threw into the distrustful mind of the King, if Maurepas deprived Richelieu of his chance of succeeding to Amelot, if he prevented him from becoming minister of foreign affairs and lending the intervention of his good offices to the King of Prussia in order to treat directly with the favourite, he in no way shook the credit of Madame de La Tournelle, who, for four months, had been tormenting the King to grant her the duchy which, in the following letter to Richelieu, she seems to be craving from the whole of France :

“ VERSAILLES, *the 17th of July 1743.*

“ When I take up my pen, dear uncle, to write to you I forget the half of what I want to say ; I cannot refrain from repeating to you once more that you seemed to show a dog's humour in your last letter, and were to the last degree unreasonable with regard to my affair ; it is no more advanced than when I last wrote to you. The King has told the Controller to look for an estate worth twenty thousand livres a year, apparently he has not yet found one ; all that I know is that he told him some time ago

that La Ferté Imbault was for sale, but if that is so, I do not want to take the title (unless indeed I take but half of it) out of courtesy for the old Duchesse de La Ferté. As for what you say about taking my own name, it would hardly be possible; firstly, I should need the permission of my father and the Comte de Mailly, and in the second place it would be a grievous insult to the family of my husband, whereas, to take the title of the estate is simple enough: they tell me that the King could name it what he liked, if the name it bore did not please me: in that case, tell me what I ought to ask. I am mighty vexed that you are not here, for one cannot say what one wants as well in writing. With regard to Vendôme and Angoulême, one cannot count on them; it is asserted that when once a domain or estate has been joined to the crown for ten years, the King is no longer at liberty to dispose of it, or at least, that it would give rise to great discussions, and we have no need of that, we want something immediate. Tell me then what you think, *particularly*, for when you are not in a bad humour, I think your advice is good, and I have confidence in you."¹

Four months later, Maurepas was obliged to register himself the erection of the Duchy of Châteauroux in these letters, in which he seems to have shrined the vengeance of his serious irony and his cold sarcasm.

"Louis, by the grace of God. . . . The right to confer titles of honour and dignity being one of the most sublime attributes of the supreme power, the Kings, our predecessors, have left us divers examples of the usage they have made thereof in favour of the persons whose virtues and merits they wished to enshrine. . . . Considering that our most dear and well-beloved cousin, Marianne de Mailly, widow of the Lord Marquis de La Tournelle, is the issue of one of the greatest families of our Kingdom, allied to our own, and to the most ancient in Europe; that her ancestors have rendered for many centuries great and

¹ Autograph Letter of the Duchesse de Châteauroux. Bibliothèque de Rouen.

important services to our Crown ; that she is attached to our well-beloved consort, the Queen, as lady of the palace, and that she unites with these qualifications all the virtues and the most excellent qualities of heart and mind, which have won her a just esteem and universal respect, we have deemed it fitting by our patent of the 21st of October last to give her the ducal peerage of Châteauroux, its appurtenances and dependencies, situate in Berry, which we have acquired by an agreement dated the 26th of September 1736, from our most dear and well-beloved, cousin, Louis de Bourbon, Comte de Clermont, prince of our blood.”¹

The King added to these letters, which were enclosed in a magnificent casket, a highly amorous epistle and the promise of a pension of 80,000 livres. And a few days later, the Duchesse de Lauraguais presented to the King, the Queen, and the Royal Family, the Duchesse de Châteauroux, who sat down in her ducal seat whilst Madame de Maurepas stood before her, and defied the anger of her gaze.² Richelieu, who had been the instrument and conductor of this intrigue, who, in concert with Madame de Brancas, had promoted the marriage of Lauraguais with Mademoiselle de Montcarvel, when the latter, it was said, was surprised by the King on one of his libertine rounds at Choisy ; Richelieu, who had paved the way for the favourite’s advancement to the rank of Duchess, received the salary which was due to his devotion and complaisance : Madame de Châteauroux gave him the post left vacant by the death of the Duc de Rochechouart ; she made the friend whom the Parisians dubbed *Président de La Tournelle* first gentleman of the chamber.

Thus, by the success of this machination, Richelieu was

¹ *Mémoires du Comte de Maurepas.* Paris, Buisson, 1792, vol. iv.

² The Marquise de La Tournelle was declared Duchesse de Châteauroux on the 21st of October 1743, at Fontainebleau.—*Journal Historique de Barbier.* Vol. ii.

raised to the front rank and promoted to a position which the constitution of the French monarchy made one of the most important influences of the day. But recently, mixed up with all the unimportant young folk of the court, obliterated and lost amongst the petty society of the *Marmousets*,¹ as they were called, a miniature edition of the court of the Valois ; yesterday an item in that band of young men who put on rouge, spent the best part of the day in bed, made use of fans, and echoed the Duc de Gesvres, their master and their model, Richelieu now suddenly issued from their ranks and grasped at fortune. He was endowed with one of those active ambitions, obstinate and unresting, but secret and alert, which are capable of moving towards a fixed and definite end with the ungirdled appearance of frivolity and pleasure. He brought to this ambition a heart of superior dryness, a vast practical contempt for women, a conscience which knew not shame, which, refusing to be shocked by the dishonour of the profession of royal go-between, asked prejudiced folk, with a smile, if they blushed when they gave their sovereign a handsome vase, a precious gem, a charming picture, and why they should blush any more to offer him the most desirable thing in the world — a woman. To this complete cynicism, worn with a gentlemanly air, if one adds an unaffected and quite French bravery, a certain tact of dissimulation, the ease with which he made use of sentimental bombast as a language and a cloak, then again all the graces of the gambler, and the fortunate gambler, the assurance of success, the insolent confidence, as it were a superstitious belief in his star — it seems that we have the whole Richelieu, and are in entire possession of the secret of his prosperity. And yet, one thing, even more than all these gifts, aided Richelieu's fortune : I allude to that modest strength, the power of assimilation which was the superior quality of this narrow spirit, this contemptible

¹ *Mémoires du Comte de Maurepas.* Paris, Buisson, 1792, vol. ii.

genius. In his numerous amours, in his *liaisons* with all the quick and delicate intelligences that the court and Paris possessed, in his contact and relations with so many women of superior endowments, the Princesse de Charolois, the Duchesse de Villeroy, Richelieu appropriated to himself all that those refined hearts, those lively wits, those penetrating eyes, those souls so set upon curiosity, those sensitive nerves, felt, divined, saw, perceived for him. It was not only that he derived from the women with whom he lived, and whose lives he crossed, the science of nothings, the deduction of appearances, the second sight into indifferent things, that sense of observation, that instinct of men and circumstances which only belongs to the sex which is armed providentially with all the arms of weakness; but he also drew from the women with whom he had relations, his policy, his diplomacy, his plans of intrigue, his audacity, the resources of his favour and the means of playing his part. It was the conversation of women, the counsels of women, the spying and reports, the indications and ideas of women which determined his projects, dictated or confirmed his resolutions, inspired or modified his plans of campaign, marked his positions on the map of the court, urged on his manœuvres and brought him victory. To remove any allusion as to the value and initiative of Richelieu's personality, it is enough to consider him and display him in this intrigue of Madame de Châteauroux: he busies himself, but it is a woman who leads him; and to see him coming and going, advancing, retreating, turning to the right, turning to the left, at Madame de Tencin's dictation, he seems the puppet of the schemes of that woman, the prime minister of the intrigue.

Richelieu and Madame de Tencin had met in the cave of intrigue, at the Abbé Dubois', at the time when the ex-nun, having escaped from Grenoble in order to come and play the D'Alembert at Paris, was keeping house and acting hostess for the Abbé, and winning the favour

of the Regent by bringing to his pleasures the variety of the debauches of antiquity, the distraction of a novel *lupercalia*.¹

Audacious projects were already germinating in that head, so scintillating with malice and wit, so nicely adjusted upon a long and graceful neck,—in that youthful Tencin who sought to have a hand in public affairs, to find some niche in the State for herself and her brother, and who, the first, perhaps, of political women in France to understand the power of those who wield the pen, flattered and cultivated that new party: the men of letters. She already possessed that experience of life, that practical knowledge of men and women, that “substantial good sense” which will make her tell Marmontel, “to make friends of women rather than of men. For by means of women, one does what one likes with men; and then, men are either, on the one hand, too dissipated, or, on the other, too much absorbed in their personal interests, not to neglect your own, whereas women think of them, if it be only from lack of occupation. But beware of being anything more than a friend to those women who you think may be useful to you.”² Between this woman, who, in spite of everything, even in spite of the indulgence of the age, could not succeed in being respected, and Richelieu, who, for all the lustre of his amours, had great difficulty in getting himself accepted by the best society—Richelieu, who was obliged to kill the Prince de Lixin in a duel in order that the name of Vignerot should no longer be buzzed in his ears³—between these two ambitions which foresaw such weighty obstacles, a *liaison* could be of no other nature than a league, the putting in common of the woman’s spirit of enterprise and the fashionable reputation of the man. Madame de Tencin believed Richelieu to be the one man who could raise her brother to the ministry, and, perhaps, after Fleury’s death, make him his successor. She attached

¹ *Mémoires du Maréchal Duc de Richelieu.* Vol. iii.

² *Mémoires de Marmontel.*

³ *Journal Historique de Barbier.*

herself to him completely, superintending the studies of his son, checking the accounts of his steward, assisting his amours, making easy, by her skilful investigations, all that he attempted, questioning and confessing for him, when he was with the army or in the provinces, the court, the town, the great and little world, the very men in livery, eavesdropping at every door, throwing open to him the inner life of the Queen and the Cardinal, testing the people with whom he was to have relations, explaining and valuing them for him, arranging his interviews, sparing him trouble, putting him on his guard against the folly of bearing grudges and the inanity of first impulses, preventing him from wasting time with *women of no account*, preaching to him, at all times, the necessity of making them talk, advising him, instructing him, pointing out to him where lay the enemy or the danger, the thing to do or the blow to fear, the favour to undermine or the credit to conciliate, in a tongue of scepticism, brief and precise, cold and clear as the voice of experience itself. Strange type of a day whose outward symbol is all indolence and languor, whose surface speaks only of the gods of repose, whereas at bottom and in the shadow, souls are shaken with the devouring ambitions and the furious energies which complain in the voice of a man of that age "of not sleeping quick enough"; Madame de Tencin is all movement, agitation, fever. The whole day spent in visits, receptions, in confabulations with ministers, with her friends, her spies, the whole night in writing, in memoranda, reports, letters of ten pages, it seems that she is only woman by her nervous system, and belongs only to humanity through that disease of the liver which still further irritates her energy with the hotness of its bile. To her, love is the question of a sofa; neither passion nor sentiment appeal to her heart, which is won over to and completely filled by the new religion of the age, christened by Maurepas "the religion of the wits." And none the less, this woman, detached from her sex, from her heart, who is above the

tender instincts, the illusions, the emotions, divides her soul with another half of herself. She lives in one of those communities of existence, in one of those complete devotions in which sceptical hearts are often concentrated and find a refuge. Those ceaseless schemes, that never-slumbering imagination, the admirable use of flattery, the resources of the intelligence, foresight, intuition, wit, seduction—all was directed by Madame de Tencin towards the ambition, towards the fortune of her brother, of that brother with whom, it was openly stated, she lived in similar relations to those in which the public would fain see another example in the famous friendship of the Duchesse du Grammont and the Duc de Choiseul; strange and profound *liaisons*, in which ambition would seem to have violated nature in order that secrets whispered to the pillow might be overheard by the family alone, that temptations as well as confidences from outside might be warded off, and this confidence and lust intimacy be protected by the discretion of one and the same blood.

No sooner are the King's amours settled by Richelieu and the favour of Madame de La Tournelle proclaimed, than Madame de Tencin speaks to Richelieu of the need there is to join their forces for Madame de La Tournelle's support, and to unite the Rohans to the Noailles against the efforts and resentment of Maurepas. She points out to him that this is the great necessity of their situation, their defence and the key-note of success: Richelieu must win over and attach to the party Madame de Rohan, that mistress whom he was unwilling to offer to the King, preferring to give him the mistress of his cousin. And in order to disarm this new sort of amorous pique, it is Madame de Tencin herself who will seek out Madame de Rohan and induce her for the future to complain only with a tepid bitterness, "that she was not able to acquire a friend, and had only seemed to Richelieu deserving of certain sentiments." Having rallied the Rohans to Richelieu, all her attention and all her strategy are directed

towards Maurepas. There is the enemy against whom Madame de Tencin never ceases to put Richelieu on his guard, the man to be feared, the minister to be ruined. She tracks, she follows him. She dins in Richelieu's ear the *gazetin* which Maurepas edits and which is handed to the King every morning, the continual peals of laughter which the King and his minister conceal in the alcoves of the windows, the alliance of Maurepas with the Controller-General, the three-quarters of an hour which Maurepas has spent with the Cardinal, his joyous aspect on leaving, the police-report of the talk in the little apartments made by Meuse for Maurepas' benefit, each step, each trace, each proceeding, each movement, even each change of expression on Maurepas' face. Then, rising to a conclusion, to a general view of the position, considering, without allowing her hostility to blind her, Maurepas' power in its entirety, his influence over the King's mind, his omnipotence over the secrets of the post, his army of spies, his manufactory of petty information, she offered Richelieu, disillusioned and brought face to face with the true meaning of things, the choice between two lines of conduct, a patched-up reconciliation or a fundamental attack ; and for the attack, it is she, once more, who traces the plan and marks out the field of action : "The navy has received fourteen millions this year and has not launched a single vessel" ; that, she said, is where you must attack Maurepas. If nothing disturbs nor frightens her, neither does anything deceive nor dazzle her. The Maréchal de Belle-Isle, whom three-fourths of the Parisians look upon as a man of genius, that Belle-Isle who renders all Europe anxious, only enters into her game as a pawn : she only sees in him a thorn in the side of the ministers, a means of destroying Maurepas, and she persuades Richelieu to reinforce the chanters of Belle-Isle's praises, to repeat that his exertions are more than human, in order to make him occupy the whole place and keep the ministry in a state of humility and nothingness. The Controller-General does not dupe

her with his air of good-nature ; and she warns Richelieu to play cards down with that ponderous *bourgeois* who hides the peasant's astuteness beneath the aspect of the mantled parts in our comedies. She pushes the Maréchal de Noailles into still greater prominence, being well aware that that hero is hardly serious, and no more than an excellent puppet to be snuffed out one day for Richelieu's benefit. It was good, according to her, to strengthen this alliance with the Noailles by a connection with the Paris-Duvergney. She saw substantial advantages in attaching herself to these powerful friends of Belle-Isle and in turning their natural enthusiasm to the profit of the Maréchal de Noailles. She saw that they had hosts of friends, "all the subterranean channels possible," money to scatter, nothing either to ask or desire, and that they would only be accessible to the blandishments of friendship. Then, in this review of the powers and influences of the court, of the individualities and groups of interests, it was D'Argenson whom she depicted as bound to the Coigny party, hostile to the Maréchal : it was the whole of Maurepas' faction which she penetrated to its very soul, even to that fair intriguer Mauconseil, of whom she said "that Richelieu would always have her person at his disposal, but never her heart."

Side-lights, informations, counsels, all concentrated upon the centre of Richelieu's operations, and upon the heart of his favour : upon Madame de Châteauroux. By Madame de Tencin, Richelieu was informed daily of the temperature of the Duchesse's friendship. Through her he penetrated into the mysteries of her interior. Madame de Tencin kept him informed of the manœuvres that were being employed in order to sap his consideration with Madame de Châteauroux, and of the renewal of the overtures that had already been made to Madame de Mailly with a view of arousing jealousy and distrust between the mistress and the favourite. Extremely piqued as Madame de Tencin was at Madame de Châteauroux' attitude of coldness to-

wards her brother, at her refusal of his services, at the repulsion she divined in her towards herself and her intrigues, she allowed resentment, even antipathy, no part in her reports upon the favourite. Her judgments upon this woman, as *exalted as the mountains*, as she somewhere speaks of her, were devoid of all passion. Her intelligence had so thoroughly freed her from the pettinesses and jealousies of her sex, that, after urging Richelieu to support her, she consented to her entrance into a great project and marked out for her a large rôle. The complaints of France were not without an echo in this feminine mind to which one may not deny lucidity and foresight, clearness and courage, and, at the same time, the instinct of a general policy, grander, in spite of the poverty of its details, than the policy of the ministry. Madame de Tencin deplored the weakness, or rather the absence of that will which gives life to monarchies, and circulates from the King throughout the State. She deplored the slumber of indifference from which nothing could rouse the King, the apathetic cowardice which persuaded him to the sorriest resolutions, because they were the least embarrassing to choose, and the least difficult to follow. In unison with public opinion she deplored the indolence of head and of heart of the sovereign whom the sight of Broglie, on his return from Germany, did not animate with a spark of indignation, of the sovereign who avoided disastrous news in order to escape from the disagreeable, and, abandoning affairs, seeing the evil and letting it pass, for fear of being compelled to put himself out or make an effort, out of lassitude believing every minister's word, seemed, at his council, as though he played pitch and toss with the gravest interests of the State. To talk reason to him, said Madame de Tencin with a depth of contempt which she could not conceal, "was like talking to the stones," and to rouse him from his torpor, she saw no other means than a violent rupture of his habits and his life, no other voice than the voice of his mistress; Madame de Châteauroux must in-

duce Louis XV. to put himself at the head of his armies. Such was the project with which Madame de Tencin, by means of Richelieu, inspired the favourite; and it was thus, that at the very moment when people's minds, disgusted with the insolence of Madame de Châteauroux, were beginning to revolt against the King, Madame de Tencin was bringing upon the stage an Agnes-Sorel in her fashion, who, according to her view, would not only win back the sympathies of the nation to the King and the King's mistress, but also earn Richelieu oblivion for his intrigues and the chance of a great fortune.¹

Madame de Tencin's project fell into a soul which was quite prepared and ripe for it: Madame de Châteauroux flung herself into the part Richelieu assigned to her. To the ardours, the haughty pride of a Montespan, she joined the energies and virile ambitions of a Longueville. That soft and indolent court, that age of petty things, that reign without pageant, without grandeur, without any adornment of majesty, seemed to her too narrow a stage for her amour; in her pride, her impatience, in the fever of her will, in the activity of her projects, in the passion of her spirit, there glowed the fire of a Fronde as well as the soul of a great reign: she set herself to stir up the King's will, to put him on a level with his duty, to make him assume, almost by doing him violence, the largest part of government, to sting him and burden him with a sentiment of his responsibility, to speak incessantly to him of ministers and the parliament, peace and war, his people, the State, and assumed, at every moment, the part and the voice of a kingly conscience to that indolent monarch, who, dazed by the tall words, the great ideas with which Madame de Châteauroux pursued him relentlessly, said to her: "You are killing me!"—"So much the better, Sire," answered Madame de Châteauroux, "*a King must rise from the dead*"

¹ Correspondence between Cardinal de Tencin and Madame de Tencin, his sister, upon the intrigues of the French Court. 1790.—Letters of Mesdames de Villars, De La Fayette, De Tencin. Chaumerot, 1823.

again."¹ "To raise the King to life!" to give back to the State a King who had been stolen from a Queen, to arm him for the honour of his crown and the salvation of his people, to march at his side erect as Victory, to be the inspiration of his courage and the mouthpiece of his glory, and, finally, to disarm the mocking songs of France with the *Te Deums* of Notre Dame . . . this is the superb ambition which possesses the favourite, dazzled by such a magnificent future. And so we see Madame de Châteauroux, exciting Louis XV. with the zeal with which she is devoured, exhorting him to war, goading him to the army. She promises him the gratitude and the adoration of his subjects. She shows him the insolence of the enemy, our frontiers threatened, our arms powerless, our generals without genius, our troops without confidence, our resources wasted. She summons the shade of Louis XIV. from the tomb to remind his grandson of the cares of his inheritance, the obligations of his race. Each hour she tempts the King with that sword of France, so goodly an arm to carry.

The intrigues of the court soon crossed the projects of Madame de Châteauroux and served them. Maurepas entered into her views; he counted, during the war and whilst with the army, on insinuating himself more closely into the King's good graces, on attaining his ends, enriching his position with all its advantages, finding easy opportunities of winning over creatures to himself, rendering his ministry more acceptable and attributing all the success of the campaign to the excellence of his advice and the swiftness of his orders. The Maréchal de Noailles followed M. de Maurepas in giving the support of his energetic representations and the authority of his position at court to the enthusiastic plans of Madame de

¹ Fragment of the *Memoirs of Madame la Duchesse de Brancas*, published in the *Lettres de Lauraguais à Madame ****. Paris, Buisson, an x.—*Portraits et Caractères de Personnages distingués de la fin du dix-huitième siècle*, par Senac de Meilhan. Dentu, 1813.

Châteauroux. Beloved by the King, feared by the ministers, rendering them uneasy by the superiority of his mind, the ascendancy of his age, the credit of his alliances, the Maréchal de Noailles has been chosen by the unanimous voice of the Council to command the army in Flanders; and the King had nominated him. This appointment was an adroit move of the ministers; by this command the Maréchal was banished from court, separated from the King's person. But the Noailles family possessed a precious counsellor, a woman of brains who, in spite of her ninety years, was still looked upon by skilled observers as the most able politician of her time. This woman, as venerable as she was redoubtable, whose whole heart and mind, during the course of her long life, had never sought anything but the aggrandisement of her house, this great-grandmother, the mother of eleven daughters and ten sons, whose children, grand-children and great grand-children, some dead, some living, pushed by her into the highest offices in the State, amounted to more than a hundred;¹ this woman of the court, without scruples or narrow prudery, who admitted that she had made equal, almost indifferent use of confessors and mistresses in order to obtain the favour of princes and the advancement of her family, the aged Maréchale de Noailles, *née* Beurnonville, was not yet glutted with the prosperity, the charges, the inheritances, the reversions she had amassed for her posterity; and when her courtiers compared her with the mother of the twelve tribes of Israel, when they promised that her race should extend as the stars of the firmament and the sands of the sea-shore, the old but insatiated Maréchale would give vent to a sigh and, at times, this exclamation: "What would you say if you knew of the fine *coups* I have missed!"² After conferring with her, the Maréchal de Noailles thoroughly entered into the ideas of Maurepas. The

¹ *Mémoires du Comte de Maurepas.* Vol. iv.

² *Mémoires du Maréchal Duc de Richelieu.* Vol. v.

Maréchale had put her finger upon the crux of the situation : it was essential that the King should join the army, so that the pleasant trick might be played upon the ministers of keeping the master under one's thumb and, with him, dealing with all the dispatches that came from Paris.

Maurepas' insinuations, the Maréchale de Noailles' representations, the insistence of Richelieu, of all his familiars, of all the courtiers who were in the interests of the mistress, all in the King's vicinity and in his most intimate surroundings conspired towards the success of Madame de Châteauroux. In the very heart of Louis XV. there was a resurrection of the vehement exhortations which the Jesuit father, Tainturier, had dared utter to his face from the pulpit, in his sermon upon the *Sluggish Life*; and he felt that stern and audacious voice re-echo within his breast, summoning him to all the activities, to all the initiatives, to all the courage incumbent upon kingship, pointing out to him, as well as his Council to enlighten, his ministers to govern, his armies to be led, so that the power of God's arm might flame within them.¹ And already the triumph of the Duchesse was ripe ; the King's decision was already taken, and amidst the applause of the public and the gladness of France, the news of the King's departure for the army was already made public, when, suddenly, M. de Maurepas threw off his mask. Whilst Madame de Châteauroux was caressing the future and her dreams, M. de Maurepas saw in the King's presence with the army his separation from Madame de Châteauroux, the King's indifference, his forgetfulness of her, and the credit of the minister established upon the ruins of the favourite. He gave Louis XV. to understand, gently at first, then more openly, that if he wished to play his kingly part in such a fashion as to win the affection of his subjects in its entirety, the esteem even of his enemies,

¹ *Journal Historique et Anecdotique du Règne de Louis XV.*, par Barbier. 1849, vol. ii.

he must carry out his sacrifice to its conclusion—in one word, separate himself from Madame de Châteauroux during the campaign; and he did not fail to remind the King of the example of Louis XIV., who, under similar circumstances, left Madame de Montespan in charge of Colbert. Madame de Châteauroux, served and defended by her party, leagued with M. d'Argenson, might struggle her utmost, fight the ground inch by inch; the words of M. de Maurepas, perhaps, even, the popularity which was dawning for the King, the applause of public opinion which was, just then, elevating his heart, giving him the strength for certain renunciations, teaching him the instinct of certain restraints, seemed to have strengthened his will: the tears of the favourite were in vain. Madame de Châteauroux received orders to remain in Paris; but, as if the King had wished to afford his mistress's humiliation a certain consolation, by treating her equally with the mother of the Dauphin, Louis XV., when he set off, forbade the Queen to follow him, and the entreaties, the humble prayers, the timid letters of Marie Leczinska met with no other answer from her husband than four dry lines, written on the edge of his desk, in which Louis XV., just before he got into his carriage, told the Queen that "considerations of expense prevented him from taking her to the frontier."

On the 2nd of May 1744 the King sets off. He reaches the army. France speaks only of him, and of him only praise. There is talk of his extraordinary gaiety, of his visits to the outlying districts of Valenciennes, to the shops, the hospitals. He has tasted the broth supplied for the sick, the soldiers' bread; and it is in all men's mouths how this must gratify the contractors. There is talk again of his application; he moves about constantly, in order to know and understand; the officers must be presented to him; he has a word for everybody. People admire the haughty tone of his reply to the ambassador-extraordinary of the Dutch: "I will give you an answer

in Flanders." The troops are all joy and confidence. *And above all*, the people repeat, *there is no more question of women*. In short, the illusion is so great, that even amongst those who know Louis XV. all hope, all say : "Have we, at last, found a King? . . ." Suddenly, the enthusiasm flags, superstitious Flanders is scandalised and alarmed, the army blushes and makes songs, derisive laughter is heard round the King's tent, veteran officers teach their juniors the refrain :

*"Ah ! Madame Enroux,
Je deviendrai fou . . ."*

A murmur of disgust and indignation rises from the whole people, the hopes of France are shattered and deceived : Madame de Châteauroux has rejoined the King at Lille.

Madame de Châteauroux and her advisers had been forced to give way before Maurepas' manœuvre ; and the only revenge Richelieu had been able to take of the minister was to obtain for him a mission to inspect the ports, a mission which took him away from the war and the King. But Madame de Châteauroux' mentor knew the King thoroughly. He knew him as a "man enslaved to habit," and before he left Madame de Châteauroux he had assured her that she would be in need of no lengthy patience, and that there was nothing in the King's virtue which need alarm either his intimates or his mistresses. On these assurances, Madame de Châteauroux went and embraced the departing Minister of War, shed tears at the Opera, then retired with Madame de Lauraguais to Champs, as the guest of M. de la Vallière. Thence she repaired to Plaisance, to the beautiful house of Paris-Duverney, where, as she received courier after courier from the King, she waited without anxiety for the fulfilment of Richelieu's pledges : two days after the King's departure, were not well-informed courtiers aware that M. de Boufflers was arranging houses with a covered way into the Citadel for the convenience of the King's amours ?

On the 3rd of June, Madame de Châteauroux wrote Richelieu the following letter, which betrays so furious an anger with Maurepas, such impatience, such uneasiness :

"PLAISANCE, the 3rd June 1744.

"Burn this letter as soon as you have read it.

"In answer to you, dear uncle, I may tell you that M. d'Argenson was playing with the Maréchal de Noailles when he gave him to understand that he should be Minister of Foreign Affairs; for the King has no wish to give it him, unless he has changed his mind within the last four days, which I do not believe. With regard to Knavey (Maurepas) I think just as you do, and am convinced that I shall never put an end to it, except by means of facts, but how to get them? Furnish me with them, and I promise you I will make use of them, for he is hateful to me, and I only admit it to you, for it would give him too much pleasure, but he is the torment of my life. There is more talk than ever of M^e. de Flavacourt, 'tis said she writes to the King, the Queen is mighty partial to her, and I know she told her she wished her to get his confidence, and the Hen answered how she had no taste for the King, on the contrary, but that her dread of being driven from court and having to live with her husband again would make her do anything. I have not breathed a word of it to the King, because I believe 'tis no good in a letter, and when I come, I mean to overwhelm him with all I know, so as to make him confess if there is any foundation for it. Admit that with what we know we have mighty reason to be uneasy: but speak to me quite frankly, does the King busy himself about me, often speak of me, is he vexed not to see me? You can very well find out all that. As for me, I am quite satisfied with him; no one could be more punctual in writing to me, nor with more confidence nor friendship, but I would not put any consequence on it: the moment when a man

deceives you is often the one when he redoubles his attentions to hide his game better. Knavey, though he is away, is moving heaven and earth; we must get rid of him, and I do not despair of it, because I do not lose sight of this fact, that in the long run one succeeds. Only give me facts and I shall be strong enough; but I must be present, else it is all different. 'Tis said that the Maréchal de Noailles does not want me to go, still the Duc d'Ayen seems to wish it. I understand nothing of it: truly, uncle dear, I was not made for this kind of thing, and from time to time I feel a terrible discouragement; if I did not love the King as well as I do, I should be mighty tempted to let everything go. I tell you the truth, I love him, no one better, but I must have a share in everything; it is one continual torment, for really, this affects me more than you will believe. It was so antipathetic to my character that I must have been a rare fool to have ever meddled with all this. Well, it is done now, I must have patience; I am convinced that everything will turn out as I desire: whatever happens, dear uncle, I can assure you you will never have a friend who loves you more tenderly. M^e. de Modena has made a pretext of the lodging the King has given her to write a line of thanks so as to give him an opportunity to put it in writing that he should like her to go to Lille, and so to put herself in the right with Madame d'Orleans, and this I have sent to the King, but she would like you to persuade the ambassador of Naples to write to her to come in all haste, and to tell her that her presence is necessary on business. Arrange this as you like, so long as we get there, for I feel that I needs must be near him. The other letter I have written you is for you to show to the King; keep a watch upon M^e. de Conly, and let me know what kind of reception the King gave her.

(*For your private eye.¹*)"

But before Madame de Châteauroux could join the

¹ Lettres Autographes de Madame de Châteauroux. *Bibliothèque de Rouen.*

army, the appearances had to be saved, or, at anyrate, the scandal to be authorised. To hew out the road a complaisant woman of rank was essential. It was a princess of the blood, the Duchesse de Chartres, whom her mother-in-law, the infamous Princesse de Conti, compelled to this course, and whose journey was screened by the pretended fall from horseback of the Duc de Chartres. The great point was carried: there was the nucleus of a female court with the King's army. It was then that Richelieu, rendered uneasy by the influence the Maréchal de Noailles was acquiring over the King's mind, by the confidential place the Duc d'Ayen was taking in his counsels, brought things to a head and played his grand card. At one and the same time, he informs the King, in that tone of Anacreontic pathos, to which the women of the age lent so fine a meaning and so many seductions, of "the journey of love, blind and disobedient, yet so worthy of pardon when its bandage be removed"; and, in order the better to assuage the fears of the mistress, as well as the scruples of the lover, he declares to both alike, in tones of decision and with an air which does not admit of an answer, that he takes upon himself the responsibility of any consequences of the meeting.

On the 6th of June, the Queen received a visit from Madame de Châteauroux, who in respectful derision came to take leave of her. The Queen carried patience and the sublimity of Christian charity to such an extent as to speak to her with so much kindness that Madame de Châteauroux' cheek was mantled with shame, and Madame de Lauraguais, embarrassed by the embarrassment of her sister, brought the interview, abruptly enough, to a close. But the Queen's trials were not yet over; she was forced to submit to the insulting courtesies of the court, of the favourites, of their followers, of a Duchesse de Modéna, of a Comtesse d'Egmont, who visited her to receive her orders before setting off for Lille: a vile comedy, which at last wore out the Queen, and brought to her lips the

impatient rejoinder: "Arrange your silly journey as you like; it is no concern of mine . . ."

Two days later, on the 8th of June, in the secrecy of the night, at an hour when the hisses of a people were silent, a barge with six oarsmen conveyed Madame de Châteauroux to the army, accompanied by Madame de Lauraguais and Madame and Mademoiselle de Bellefond.

Notwithstanding all the decency in which Richelieu cloaked the meeting, skilful as were the arrangements made by this master of the ceremonies to the King's pleasures, in despite of the court of honour bestowed upon adultery which included no fewer than three princesses of the blood, the murmurs grew in volume, the songs of the Suisses no longer respected even the ears of the King. The King, the favourite and her sister, the Duc de Richelieu himself thought fit to make a semblance of yielding to the outburst of feeling from Paris, the provinces and the army. The King set off for the Siege of Ypres, leaving Madame de Châteauroux at Lille. It was from Lille, after the news of the fall of Ypres, that the proud Duchesse wrote Richelieu this letter, which opens as haughtily as some Spanish rhodomontade, and is written upon paper, bearing the motto—quaint juxtaposition! *Pro patria:*

"*LILLE, this 25th of June 1744, half-past two of the morning.*

"Without a doubt, dear uncle, this is mighty pleasant news, and gives me huge pleasure, I am overwhelmed with joy, to take Ipres in nine days, you can think of nothing more glorious, more flattering to the King, and his great-grandfather, great as he was, never did the like; but what follows must be in the same key and things must always happen in this way. We must hope for it, and I flatter myself 'twill be so, since you are aware how ready I am to see everything through rosy glasses, and that I believe that my star, of which I think much, and which, above all, has no evil influence, will serve us for

good generals, minister, etc. He never did a better thing than to put himself under its guidance. Tell me something, pray, of how Meuse comes to be dying ; what folly, yet I am really grieved, the news has vexed me all day : I do not like to see an end of the people with whom I live ; send and inquire about him for me, and if you see him, tell him how sorry I am to hear of his condition. M^e. de Modéna is dying to see the King's entrance into Ypres ; she would like me to ask the King's permission. I have done nothing, because I am not sure whether it would not be better for me not to go, since we agreed, if you remember, before you left, that unless I were received with honour I had better not go at all, and that is what I think. I told her that I would consult you, and that I had no great mind for it. Tell me what you think, and that with all speed, because I think there is not a moment to be lost. I shall be glad if Du Vernay will give me Montmartel's answer about the rooms. It is too late for me to go into this question ; all I can say is that I will hold out for them as well as I can. Good night, dear uncle ; I love you with my whole heart.”¹

After the fall of Ypres, Madame de Châteauroux went to await the King at Dunkirk, and let him visit the principal towns of Flanders alone. The King had hardly rejoined her, when the news that Prince Charles had crossed the Rhine, the threat of an invasion, determined him, against the advice of his Council, to proceed to the help of Alsace. Madame de Châteauroux refused to leave the King. She obtained leave to follow him ; and at whatever place they stopped, the Grand-Marshal of the Household, the Comte de la Suse, arranged beforehand a communication between their two apartments. At Rheims a sudden and surprising illness confined the Duchesse to her bed. And whilst the physicians saw no more in her illness than an indisposition, the courtiers

¹ Lettres autographes de Madame de Châteauroux. *Bibliothèque de Rouen.*

attributed it to remorse, regret, to one of those reactions of the heart, so common with women, the shock of handsome D'Agenois' wound at the taking of the Château Dauphin. In the midst of the consultations and rumours, the King, wrapped in his gloomy thoughts, talked of nothing but of where Madame de Châteauroux should be buried and of how her tomb should be designed. He delayed his departure from Rheims a day, stopped only at Châlons and reached Metz where he was rejoined by Madame de Châteauroux, cured of her malady, and having imposed silence upon her heart and the past. It was here that the royal amours, grown callous to the murmurers, stage by stage, hid themselves the most immodestly: a wooden gallery was noisily erected between the King's and the favourite's apartments, in the Abbey of St Arnould, and four streets barred to the people, published the scandal and advertised their secret.

Suddenly, in the ashamed and murmuring town, in the midst of those flagrant pleasures which were barely respected by the glances of the excited populace, the King, after a great supper and numerous toasts drunk to his new ally, the King of Prussia, after an exhausting night,—the King was taken ill. A malignant fever set up. From the 4th to the 12th of August, in spite of bleeding and purges, the symptoms were aggravated, and the disease grew worse; on the 12th a physician of Metz, Cassera, refused to answer for the King's life. Immediately, the doors of the King's apartments are closed. No one has further entry. Madame de Châteauroux and Richelieu, the confidant and the mistress, take possession of the King, occupy him, hold him. Round his bed, like sentinels, are drawn up Meuse and Madame de Lauraguais, the aides-de-camp, the faithful servants, all the intimate and compromised attendants. Madame de Châteauroux watches over her lover with an eye of despair. She clings to the few remnants of hope with which Richelieu supports her: the King's youth, Chirac's skill, La Peyronie's devotion;

and leaning over the pillow of the dying man, aghast and trembling, and forcing herself to smile, she fights for him with sickness and death, terror and remorse. . . .

But a few paces from the bed, where the master struggles with his death agony, in the hands of Richelieu, amid the tears and caresses of his mistress, the Princes of the Blood, separated from the King's person, the grand officers of the crown deprived of their functions, all at court who still clung to honour or represented the Church—Bouillon, La Rochefoucauld, Villeroy, the Bishop of Soissons, the Jesuit father, Pérusseau, the King's confessor, had come together in the King's antechamber, and formed a league of the princes against the party of the mistress. An increase in the patient's fever, his delirium, soon enforced their resolutions, precipitated their proceedings and the struggle. After spying out the ground, Madame de Châteauroux' enemies, led by Fitz-James, in conjunction with the Bishop of Metz, directed all their efforts to obtain the admission of a confessor to the King. But the doors were well guarded. Madame de Châteauroux would have no princes in the room ; bishops and confessor only during the mass, and as soon as mass was over, she sent the ushers to bid them retire. The party of the Princes wishing to turn the tables, forced Chirac and La Peyronie to have a public consultation and declare what they thought of the King's condition. But Chirac and La Peyronie, who were in the interest of Madame de Châteauroux, declared firmly that there was nothing in the King's delirium to alarm the doctors, and that his illness had not yet taken a decisive turn. They added that their cross-examiners ought to be afraid of the effect of the alarm they were already spreading abroad ; that this alarm, if the King perceived it, might change the nature of his feverish fits, bring him into danger, and cause a catastrophe for which the doctors were not answerable. The tone of this reply astonished and wounded the court, and, for a moment, there was talk of arresting the King's physician and surgeon, who

were both Huguenots. Then, putting violent measures on one side, the two parties held a parley. Through her intermediaries, Madame de Châteauroux replied to the representations of the princes that, undoubtedly, nothing was more just than the desire to serve the King, and fulfil the duties of their offices, but that neither was there anything more just than to submit to the spoken wishes of the King, "that is the first of duties"; and, seeing the increasing danger of her audacious resistance, the energy of the Bishop of Soissons, the animation of the princes, reunited in secret conference, alarmed at the King's weakness, at his delirious terrors, which are, presently, to make him take the smoke of burnt paper for the flames of Hell,—thinking, whenever the door opens, she hears the confessor arriving, the canons of the Church and her own disgrace pronounced in the absolution of her lover, she held council after council with Richelieu and the *valet-de-chambre* of the King's pleasures. The issue of these confabulations was a remarkable decision: the mistress resolved to treat with the confessor. The interviews took place, at the back of the King's bed, in a little closet the door of which Richelieu guarded. The Duchesse began by going straight to her end, asking the Jesuit priest, if she would be compelled to leave, in the event of the King desiring confession and the sacraments; and as the man of God hesitated to be explicit, she asked him for a clear answer, pointing out to him how greatly a scandalous dismissal would compromise the King's reputation, and the advantage that would accrue to her personal honour, as well as to that of the monarch, if her departure were voluntary and private. Pérusseau, who was zealous for the King's salvation, possessed subtlety and acuteness, a great attachment to his order and office, wishing to make reservations and bind himself to nothing, stammered, said nothing to the point, discreetly repeated himself in formulas and vague suppositions: "But, Madame, perhaps the King will not want to confess. . . ." "He will," said the Duchesse quickly, and speaking of the

King's religious feeling and of her own, she declared that she would be the first person to exhort the King to confess, for the sake of example, that she would not herself incur the responsibility of his abstaining ; but that it was a question of avoiding a scandal : would she be sent away ? Pérusseau, in his agitation, still sought to evade Madame de Châteauroux' question, explaining to her that he was not allowed to arrange a sick person's confession beforehand, that the King's life was unknown to him, adding that, personally, he was quite without prejudice as to the relations between the King and Madame la Duchesse, that, in a word, all depended upon the King's admissions. . . . "*If you only want admissions !*" interrupted Madame de Châteauroux ; and in a few words, in free and cavalier tones, she made her lover's confession ; then, returning obstinately to her question, she once more asked the Jesuit openly whether it was a case of her dismissal by the dying Louis XV., or if there were no exceptions for kings ?

More embarrassed than ever, influenced by conflicting feelings, conscientiously allied with the party to which the King's confession implied the dismissal of his mistress, considering also the weight of Madame de Châteauroux' anger if the King were to recover without confession, Pérusseau, having come to an end of his ambiguous phrases, was gently making for the door of the little closet, anxious to escape, when Richelieu, seeing his manœuvre and blocking his retreat, begs him to grant Madame de Châteauroux, beforehand, the favour of being dismissed from court without scandal ; and as the Jesuit takes refuge in silence, Richelieu, rushing up to him, cajoling and urging him with embraces, drags him back to Madame de Châteauroux, who, with tears in her eyes, humble and ingratiating, swears to him that if he will avert a scandal, she will withdraw from the King's room during the course of his malady, will only return to court as his friend, that she will be converted and confess to

him. Caresses nor promises, nothing could drag from Pérusseau the secret of the sacrifice he meant to exact from the King before reconciling him with God ; and the capitulation proposed by Madame de Châteauroux only emboldened the party of the princes, which was reinforced by that of the ministers, by Maurepas and D'Argenson, and all the courtiers who desert a favour on the wane. It was not long before the ante-chamber stormed the King's room, and in the struggle at the doors, the conflict was carried to the point of personal abuse ; between Richelieu and the Duc de Chartres, to that of personal violence. Finally, Clermont, goaded on by the more timorous spirits, actually reached the King's bedside, and informed him of the desire of the Princes of the Blood to be allowed to enter for a few moments. But Madame de Châteauroux was as prompt in parrying the success of this manœuvre, which led up directly to a confession, by persuading the King that he was not so ill as they would make him out : and she called in the Duc de Richelieu, who, pluming himself upon his knowledge of medicine, and incessantly feeling the King's pulse, swore to him, on his life, that his sickness was only a slight trouble of the bowels. So that, when the Bishop of Soissons took advantage of the mass to let the King know, in theological terms, that a confession would be seasonable, the King, flushed with the assurances of Madame de Châteauroux, told him that it was not yet time, and met his entreaties with the objection that his headache was too bad, he had too many things to remember and tell, he was in need of rest. When the bishop had left, the sick man, harassed and torn asunder between his gratitude for, and his terror of his past, between his pleasures and his salvation, repulsed Madame de Châteauroux' caresses and her hands, which seemed to sully his body with sin. "*Perhaps, we ought to separate . . .*" he murmured, "*Very well,*" replied the favourite, in tones of wounded pride. On the evening

of the same day, at eleven o'clock, the Duc de Richelieu sent word to the princes and grand officers who besieged the bed-chamber that the King had no further orders for them : this was equivalent to forbidding them to approach his bed-side. Madame de Châteauroux had once more stolen the King from the Church, his household, and himself. But, on the day following, La Peyronie, in alarm, went to the Duc de Bouillon, and informed him that the King had but two days to live, and that it was necessary to confess him. M. de Bouillon at once sent Champcenetz to the King to repeat the proceedings and representations of the Comte de Clermont ; and the King, dying, feeling that he was dying, with no more strength, exhausted by the long dispute around his person, summoned the princes and all his chamber before mass. Here, however, the success of Madame de Châteauroux' enemies halted : and when M. de Bouillon spoke to the King of his desire to resume the duties of his office, the King gathered together all his energies to prevent him. The suspicions which had been inspired in him by the favourite as to the eagerness with which the grand officers of the crown waited to see the sacraments to be administered to him in order to make a parade of their office, re-awoke in his mind. In spite of all, weakness, sickness, death, were hourly removing the dying man out of Madame de Châteauroux' influence. He had almost lost the power of speech, when he was seized with a faintness which lasted for several minutes, and spread consternation everywhere. Madame de Châteauroux sees him pale, motionless ; she thinks he is dead. . . . But it is as another thunderbolt when the King, recovering his senses and his voice, cries : " My broth, my broth ! . . . and the Père Pérusseau ! quick, the Père Pérusseau ! "

Richelieu and Madame de Lauraguais led away the favourite into the closet in which a few days before she had conferred with the confessor. Madame de Châteauroux, anxious and palpitating, listens and awaits ; dazed

at her fall, chewing the cud of her shame, she is impatiently expecting her disgrace, when the door is flung wide open, and a voice flings exile in the two sisters' faces: "*Ladies, the King commands you to leave his presence immediately.*" This voice was an additional humiliation to Madame de Châteauroux: it was that of the Bishop of Soissons.¹

What a return! What a flight for the proud duchesse! Fallen from such high estate to the carriage of the Maréchale d'Uxelles, in which she had to hide the tears of her pride, in order to escape recognition; pursued by the furious echoes of Metz, she passed and sped, trembling amidst the insults which overwhelmed her. Then, suddenly, at Bar le Duc, she halted, and clinging to hope with that cold passion which seems her real soul, she informed Richelieu of her resolution to remain at Sainte-Menehould, and there await events, in this letter, in which all that shows a woman's heart is the anger and impatience of a furious vengeance:

“At BAR-LE-DUC, ten o'clock.

“I know not why, dear uncle, you would not let me hope, since the improvement is considerable, and Dumoulin himself says he has much hope. I assure you, I cannot get it into my head that he will die; it is impossible that the monsters should triumph, but what you tell me of M. de La Rochefoucault vexes me mightily, especially if it is to say something to *Knavey*. I quite believe that as long as the King's mind is weak he will be very devout; but as soon as he is somewhat recovered, I will wager that I shall be tremendously in his mind, and that in the end he will not be able to resist, but will speak of me, and

¹ *Mémoires du Maréchal Duc de Richelieu.* Vol. vii.—*Mémoires du Marquis d'Argenson.* Jannet, 1857, vol. ii.—*Mémoires du Comte de Maurepas.* Buisson, 1792, vol. iv.—*Fragment des Mémoires de la Duchesse de Brancas.* Lettres de Lauraguais. Buisson, an x.—*Les Amours de Zéo-Kinizul, soi des Coffrants (par Crébillon fils).* Amsterdam, 1746.—*Janastes, conte Allégorique, par Mademoiselle de ——.* The Hague, 1745.

ask Lebel or Bachelier quietly what has become of me. As they are for me, my business will be all right ; I do not see the future all in black if the King recovers, and, truly, I believe he will. After mature reflection, I shall not go to Paris ; I shall stay at Sainte-Menehould with my sister, and the ladies will continue their journey ; it is useless to mention this, because two or three days, at least, must pass before it is known, and I can very well have been taken ill on the road, which, indeed, is not at all unlikely ; but remember that, between then and now, things may be decided for good or ill. If for good, no one will dare say anything ; and as the King did not specify any place to me, but said to Paris, ‘or where she likes, so long as it is far enough away,’ it is more respectful to him, if he recovers, that I should have thought twenty leagues was the world’s end, and have retired to a place where I could have no sort of news nor consolation, and be exclusively alone with my grief. And, again, in his convalescence, forty leagues more or less would make a difference, if he would not see me again, for I do not count on that so soon, but send me a word. If he dies, I will go to Paris, where I should remain in order to talk with you. With regard to my post, I declare to you, it is all the same to me, if I do not get it ; naturally, I wish to have nothing to reproach myself with ; besides, whatever they may do to me, I shall remain in Paris with my friends, but, I assure you, I should regret the King my whole life long, for I loved him to madness, and far more than I ever showed. As to communicating with Mirepoix or Broglie, I do not hold with it. As long as the King is alive, it does not befit me to approach anyone, no matter whom ; I must patiently endure all the tortures they care to inflict upon me. If he recovers, I shall have the larger reprisals, and he will be the more tied down to a public reparation : if he dies, I am not inclined to any lowering of myself, were the crown of France to be gained by it. Up to the present time I have behaved, as I ought

to have behaved, with dignity. I shall ever maintain the same course; it is the only means of making myself respected, of winning back the public to my side, and of retaining the consideration which I think I deserve. I forgot to tell you that Soissons denies that he spoke to the King about M^e. de Lauraguais, that I quite believe him, and that I thought, from the very first, that it came from the King, out of kindness to me, in order that we should not be separated, because my sister was my consolation; but this must not be repeated, since it would justify Soissons, and, in truth, that score is not yet wiped out. To-night, then, I shall be at Sainte-Menehould. I beg you, therefore, to let me have a courier to-morrow morning, and every day, for you cannot imagine in what a position I find myself, away at such a moment. Never leave M. de La Rochefoucault in private with the King, for that makes me uneasy; if he recovers, he will be grieved at all he has said and done. I am convinced that he will receive the Queen perfectly, and will pay her a thousand compliments, because he thinks he has done her wrong, for which he owes reparation. You will let me know who are the ladies she has brought with her. You will inform M. de Soubize of the resolution I have formed to stay at Sainte-Menehould, and, above all things, *couriers!* If he recovers, dear uncle, how fine it will be, you will see; I am convinced that this is a mercy sent from Heaven to open his eyes, and that the wicked shall perish. If we get out of this, you will admit that our star will carry us a long way, and nothing will be impossible to us; and I am full of hope. You did well to keep Vernage's letter; do not lose it, it may be useful to us. My sister joins me in thanking you. I love you tenderly.
Burn my letters."¹

When she reached Sainte-Menehould, on the 18th, the

¹ Lettres Autographes de la Duchesse de Châteauroux. *Bibliothèque de Rouen.*

day on which Paris hears the news of the convalescence—news which has not yet reached the Duchesse de Châteauroux, the tone of her mind is completely changed. To the physical fatigue which makes her pen falter, causes her to write *davante* for *davantage*, moral depression is added. And she gives Richelieu her word that all is over for her, in this confession of the moment, this despair of an hour :

“At SAINTE-MENEHOULD, the 18th, at eleven o'clock.

“I am convinced that the King will recover, and I am in the greatest rapture over it; his devotion seems to me carried to its utmost extent, and I am not astonished at it. Do not be alarmed at my suggestion that I should remain here. My letter was no sooner sent than I reflected how absurd it would be, and we shall set off to-morrow without fail, but what with one thing and another, it is natural enough that I should lose my head. Rest assured, I promise I am going to Paris immediately; if there is any talk of delay, you can say that it is the fault of the horses, which is the case, and I give you my word of honour that I am not dawdling. I hope you will have to put up with no painful scene; that would be too much: but it is very certain that you are more to be pitied than the others, being more feared and less supported. All this is terrible enough, and gives me a furious loathing for the country I have dwelt in very much against my own will, and so far from wishing some day to return there, as you believe, I feel sure that, even if I were to be asked, I could not persuade myself to it. All I wish from the future is reparation for the affront they have put upon me, and not to be dishonoured—that, I assure you, is my sole ambition. Good-night; I can say no more; I am half dead. If you write to me through the post, send me merely news of the King, without any comments; but I should like to know how *Knavey* has been received. I count upon a courier from time to time.

What does M^e. de Boufflers say about our sad adventure? give her my compliments. I have seen the *Hen*; she well deserves some little proof of kindness from Monsignor de Soissons. I do not despair of it; or perhaps it will come from the King. That would be a merry enough jest. Oh, my God! what a thing is all this! I give you my word, it is all over with me. One would need to be a poor fool if one wished to start it all over again; and you know how little I was flattered or dazzled by all the grandeurs, and that, if I had been true to myself, I should never have been where I was. But it is done; one must make up one's mind to think no more of it, try and calm one's mind, and not fall sick."¹

The road was resumed. It was an endless journey, amidst a sea of maledictions, in the shameful and detested carriage which seemed to convey the unpopularity of the King. Madame de Châteauroux hid herself whenever the horses were changed. At each town, at each village, she slunk back and took refuge in some by-road, where the horses were brought to her, powerless as they were to carry her fast enough to silence in her ears the voices on the horizon and the distant murmur which asked for her head. At last, she slipped undetected into that Paris which had no attention for anything save the couriers from Metz, was absorbed in anxiety, in prayers and tears, proffering to *Louis the Well-Beloved* one of those great national loves of France which resemble love itself: they have its passion, its glow, its sincerity, as well as its reaction, its lack of logic and caprices. There, still in hiding and flying from the populace of Paris, an enforced prisoner from the hootings of the streets and the brutalities of the markets, she was torn asunder between her supporters and her importunities. Tears gave way to revolt, depression to pride. She rejected first disgrace

¹ Lettres Autographes de la Duchesse de Châteauroux. *Bibliothèque de Rouen.*

and then hope, and in this weak woman's frame, stirred and tortured by nervous attacks which ended in convulsions, the conditions of the soul were being ceaselessly repeated and changed. On hearing the news of the King's reconciliation with the Queen, Madame de Châteauroux gave way to despair; then, getting the better of it, she took courage and fell back on the correspondence with Richelieu which she had never abandoned, and which she carried on with that air of irony and the superficial smile on the lips which is sometimes the mask and accent of the most bitter and profound sorrow that is known to pride. She summed up her creatures, her party, her chances. She thought of Richelieu's ability, of the manœuvres of the Princesse de Conti; and, trampling her grievances and the present under foot, she forgot herself in the pursuit of her interrupted dreams, consoled herself with the future, and informed Richelieu of her plans of intrigue and the reasons she had for hoping, in the following terms:—

"... For my part I think that if he (the King) were to go there alone,¹ that would be the best way of ridding him of the Queen, and that on his return, he should resume his ordinary course of life; I am quite convinced that this is how he thinks himself, and that he is even now meditating all these arrangements. I think that the first time he sees his aides-de-camp, he will be somewhat embarrassed, but you must try and put him as much at his ease as is possible, perhaps you do not know the reason why M^{gr}. de Soissons has treated me so gently, 'tis because he is the most ambitious man in the world, and has asked the King for the place of M^{gr}. the Cardinal de Rohan, and knew that I was opposed to him and greatly urged on the King the claims of the coadjutor. You will assure me that he

¹ To Strasbourg, where the Queen asked permission to follow the King, who, instructed by Richelieu, the result of this letter of Madame de Châteauroux, answered her that "it was not worth while." Vide *Vie du Maréchal de Richelieu*. Vol. vii.

is a holy man, and that it is fully proved that his motive has been religion, but, forsooth, to have been ready, at a certain moment, to see the King perish for private interests, is an incredible thing, and one I shall not soon forget. Farewell, dear uncle, I am very sorry not to see you, you know how fond of you I am.

"Forward all these letters to their addresses, under cover. Since my letter was written I have learned from yours what M. d'Argenson has written to you. I cannot describe what a state it has put me in, I am in despair; from the date of M. d'Argenson's, I see that it was at his second communion that this was asked of him, and I prefer that it should have been at such a time than at the present moment when he is quite himself; there has been no talk about it at all, apparently he has mentioned nobody else, and I do not consider everything for lost. You did quite right in writing to him, I myself have a little letter all ready—and only wait the proper moment to dispatch it—in which he will learn all that has passed from the beginning of his illness to its conclusion. But one must wait one's time, if one would not miss one's effect. I cannot get it into my head that all this will end badly, and am even persuaded that you will get your embassy. You would have done well to keep the secret of M. d'Argenson's letter, and I am dying of fear lest you should have spoken of it; you are right indeed in saying that it would be wise to recall the day of my dupes; I have no doubt about it, 'tis indeed a Thursday to-day, but one needs patience, truly one needs a great deal. All the accounts that have been sent you of what is said in Paris are quite accurate, you would hardly believe to what an extent, if you had shown yourself there at that moment you would have been torn in pieces. You are quite right to love Madame d'Aiguillon as much as you do, and to write to her so often, for she makes a fine use of your letters, and assumes to take a great interest in you, and to be mighty fond of you; I have never seen anyone so

mad as you, you believe everything that is told you and that you are loved to madness, truly 'tis pitiable. The King continues to bore himself in Paris, I am even afraid that this may protract his convalescence, but it only rests with himself to arrange it all, in default of which he is the less to be pitied. You sent me word that you would tell me what means you had found to induce Lebel and Bachelier to keep you informed of all that was passing, but, Lord above! you have done nothing, and you seem to me mighty ill-informed, but one cannot complain when one receives letters from such agreeable ministers. It is very nice of M. d'Argenson to treat you as he does, and I am all the more pleased, because at the present moment it is most necessary to have someone such as he up one's sleeve. I tell you that we shall get out of it, and of this I am convinced; it will be a fine moment, I wish it were here already, you will believe that. Farewell, dear uncle, I love you, I love you with my whole heart, and am grieved at having involved you in my misfortune, that, I vow to you, makes it all the worse. Burn all my letters, that is to say, all I have written to yourself. I was quite forgetting to tell you that you were most right in your resolution not to resign your office, you would have been mad indeed; you must only give that up with your head, and I feel convinced that whatever M. de Soissons may say or do, that will stay for a long time on your shoulders, and we shall have the pleasure of seeing it for a long time to come. It would be merry, however, if they were to cut off your head for what you have done during the King's illness, for I cannot conceive what they can have told him."¹

In a subsequent letter of the 13th of September, Madame de Châteauroux thought fit to adopt a new *rôle*, a *rôle* that did not admit of attack, that of the King's friend, and her assurance took an air of triumphant defiance:

¹ Lettres Autographes de la Duchesse de Châteauroux. Bibliothèque de Rouen.

"This 13th of September, from PARIS.

"Calm yourself, dear uncle, there are some fine times coming for us, we have had bad moments in the past, but they are past. I do not know the King as a bigot, but I know him for an honourable man, capable of friendship ; whatever reflections he may make, without flattering myself, I think they cannot but be to my advantage ; he is quite sure of me and quite convinced that I love him for himself, and he is quite right, for I felt that I loved him to madness, but it is a great point that he should know it, and I hope that his illness has not made him lose the memory. Hitherto, no one but I has known his heart, and I can answer to you that it is a good, very good one ; and most capable of sentiment. I will not deny to you that there is something singular in all this, but that is not what matters, devout he will remain but not bigoted ; I love him a hundred times better, I shall be simply his friend, and henceforth I shall be beyond attack ; all that the knaves have done during his illness will only render my lot more fortunate and stable, I need no longer fear change nor illness nor the devil, and we will lead an exquisite life,—bring a little more faith to what I tell you, these are no dreams, you will see if they are not realized, it is all founded on the knowledge I have of the man with whom we have to do, and I assure you I know all the twists of his soul, and there is goodness and beauty in it. You must not judge him from how he has treated you, it was not altogether his own doing, and I am convinced that they told him something terrible and I cannot conceive what it was. I do not even yet feel sure that you are not to go to Spain ; but in any case I do not think that he will appoint anyone else, he will have the request made by the Bishop of Rennes, that is my notion, whatever you may say about it. You are quite right in saying that I ought to cherish no hope of being reinstated, it is useless and it would increase the rage of those monsters which is already formidable

enough; I think like you about my letter, it is better to wait than to fail of one's effect.¹ Montmartel is at one with me here also, Madame de Tencin would like it to be sent, but they see, as we do, the consequences, if it did not fall well. Adieu, dear uncle, keep in good health; for myself, I am seriously thinking of growing as strong as a soldier, so as to infuriate my enemies for as long as I can and have time to ruin them, as they shall be ruined, be sure of that. You know my friendship for you, it is, I vow to you, of the tenderest kind; give my compliments to Messieurs de Soubise et D'Ayen; when you next see Du Mesnil, give him a thousand messages and tell him that I did not reply to him because I knew not where to catch him. I enclose a letter for Monsieur Daumont, which you will give him punctually with my compliments."²

¹ This letter which Madame de Châteauroux wished to send the King, at a seasonable time, did not reach him until the 10th of October, while at Saverne, on his way to the siege of Fribourg.

² Lettres Autographes de Madame de Châteauroux. *Bibliothèque de Rouen*. Appended are two letters from Madame de Châteauroux to Richelieu, also written from Paris before her return to favour.

"From PARIS, this 18th of October.

"I have seen the Cardinal de Tencin, with whom I am delighted, dear uncle; he showed me the letter which you sent to the King, which I find amusing and very good, it must surely have pleased him, but you did wrong in answering verbally the question he put to you; you should have written to him, it is astonishing how little you know him, and you are as surprised as any new-comer at court, odd man that you are. I have seen, and see Madame de Boufflers daily, at which I am delighted; but my sister not so much I think; I beg you to convey my compliments to M. de Belle-Isle, and tell him that if I did not write to him upon his lieutenancy it was because . . . I do not know, but I count on you to put it prettily, you know very well that I forgot to write to him, and want you to repair my folly. Farewell, dear uncle, I love you, no one better, I assure you, and am in despair at being so long without seeing you. By the way, the little Saint will raise difficulties as to the leave of absence you ask for your estates, but try and win your suit, for it would be ridiculous that you should have a fortnight free after the siege without coming to Paris; that would give them cause to say that you were in disgrace. The enclosed letter for the Chevalier de Grille."

The lieutenancy of M. de Belle-Isle, of which Madame de Châteauroux speaks, is the lieutenancy-general of Lorraine which was given him by the King of Poland on the 1st of October 1744.—The siege is the siege of Fribourg, which did not fall until the 1st of November.

"From PARIS, October the 25th.

"Enclosed is a memorandum, dear uncle, which will explain to you what

Then the breeze and humour of a moment carried away everything : an absolute and boundless despair paralysed all her faculties, the very strength of a desire failed her, and she remained inert, her thought slumbering, her will dead, in one of those moods of lethargy which she depicted so amply when she said "she could no longer recognise in herself either Madame de La Tournelle or Madame de Châteauroux, but felt herself become a stranger to herself."¹ Then a mere nothing would raise her from the abyss, a sting of her self-love, a sentiment of vengeance against Maurepas, against Pérusseau, and the impatience of a startling and pitiless revenge was not long in possessing her, and tinging her ideas with the madness of fever. The King, having entirely recovered in the month of September, soon gave signs of a melancholy which restored Richelieu's audacity and hope ; love was not dead within that heart which found only solitude wherever Madame de Châteauroux was not. The courtier returned to his task, he resumed his projects, and worked for the favourite with the ardour of a man who is working for his fortune : did he not see in the distance, at the end of his efforts, behind the return of Madame de Châteauroux, that personal triumph

we desire you to do for M. de Fesy ; truly, if you can do it, you will be doing a good deed, for it is very annoying to him that he should have lost the affair of the post-office, and this would, in some sort, compensate him ; in short, I have been asked to beg you most urgently to obtain it for him, and thus I fulfil my mission. From your last letter, I see you are in a mighty bad humour, and I can not say that you are wrong, for all that has befallen you is disagreeable enough, and I feel it, I assure you, even more than you. But why should we not think of sending you to meet the Dauphine ; that mission is said to be even more honourable than the other. I spoke of it yesterday to the Cardinal de Tencin, who approved of my idea ; what do you say to it ? If you were to approve it, we would find the means of broaching it to the King, but above all, do not appear to think of it, and speak of it to nobody, for if we were to be unsuccessful things would be even worse. I wished to write to you at some length to-day, but have been sick as a dog all day with my colic. I can but bid you a brief good-night, this cursed siege makes me tremble, I can not tell you what anxiety you give me, for I shall look upon it as a sort of miracle if one of you comes back ; you know, dear uncle, how I love you ; I assure you I have not changed, on the contrary, if it is possible, I love you even more."—*Lettres Autographes de la Duchesse de Châteauroux. Bibliothèque de Rouen.*

¹ Letter of the Duchesse de Châteauroux, published in the *Isographie*.

for his ambition, that superb recompense for his zeal, the re-establishment in his favour of the dignity of Constable of France? After having made clear his path, after sounding the King by the Cardinal de Tencin and the Marechal de Noailles, he drew up for the King a memoir upon his illness at Metz, a skilful document in which he had cunningly inserted shadows and suspicions, lent motives of expediency to his adversaries' conduct, attributed in short to all Madame de Châteauroux' enemies, who had abused the King's remorse and weakness, sentiments of egoism, ambitious views, almost a desire and an impatience for the King's death. The King cooled towards the Queen. During a short visit to his father-in-law at the court of Lorraine, his distraction and his silence revealed a man in love, engrossed by his memory and his regrets. Glory smiled on him no longer, war seemed like a long weariness; and on the 8th of November, as soon as the capitulation of Fribourg was signed, he started back in all haste for Paris. He hastened to seek there, not applause and triumph, but the forgiveness of his mistress.

Kept informed of the course of events by Richelieu, following pulse by pulse the movements of the King's heart, strengthened and confirmed in the insolence of her pride by her certainty of obtaining everything, the Duchesse de Châteauroux had formed the resolution not to return to court without the most formal securities and the largest satisfaction. Before she would forget or forgive the scenes of Metz and the ignominies of her disgrace, she required an expiation proportionate with her humiliation, a vengeance which should be startling—nor was that yet enough—but which should strike terror. The very honour of the King seemed interested in this reparation. At all events, at the first interview, on the night of Friday to Saturday the 14th of November, when the King, escaping from the Tuilleries by stealth in order to hasten to the Rue du Bac where Madame de Châteauroux was lodging, presented himself before her, Madame de Châteauroux began by feeling

indisposed, confused at the unlooked-for satisfaction : the visit of a King, who came in person to make her his excuses and ask her conditions for a reconciliation ; and Louis XV. could extract no more from her than these disjointed words : “*How they have treated us !*” The King implored her humbly to come to Versailles : Madame de Châteauroux only consented to repair there incognito ; her official return was to be preceded by the retirement of all her enemies. And the next day she set off for Versailles, concealed in one of those carriages known as “chamber-pots.” Before leaving, she said to her people, who warned her of Maurepas’ spies : “*Very soon he will give me no more trouble. . .*”¹

Once arrived at Versailles her emotion vanished. She resumed her haughty airs and exigencies. She played at detachment, indifference, and answered the King’s solicitations coldly : “She was satisfied not to be rotting in a prison by his command, pleased to have the liberty and enjoyments of a private life, but it would cost France too many heads if she were to return to his court.” At this last phrase, the King stopped her. He told her “that everything must be forgotten, and she must return that same night to Versailles, and resume her apartment and offices at court.” But these words of the King scarcely discouraged the favourite’s hopes of vengeance. The scenes of Metz, as she was aware, had humiliated the King’s self-conceit. Louis XV. had seen in them a diminution of the royal authority and will, a dangerous encroachment of the Church, and a victory for the clergy carried to the point of insolence by the preachers of Paris. The memoir and policy of Richelieu had still more envenomed the King’s secret terrors, and the disheartening picture of all the ambitions which had hastened to surround his death-bed with attitudes of devotion, had touched him keenly and profoundly. All that reminded him of Metz seemed to him inopportune and suspicious ; and all those who had driven him to a public repentance for his frailties had become to him almost as

¹ Fragment des Mémoires de la Duchesse de Brancas. Lettres de Lauraguais.

odious as to Madame de Châteauroux. He cherished a secret hatred for Chatillon, the Dauphin's governor, who had brought the Dauphin to Metz against his wishes ; he entertained a lively resentment against Madame de Chatillon, who had insulted his amours and spoken, in her letters to the Queen of Spain, of Madame de Châteauroux' unworthiness. And for the remainder of the campaign he had not concealed his wrath with Fitz-James, Bishop of Soissons, and his confessor, Pérusseau. There was nothing, then, which separated the King from Madame de Châteauroux but his horror of bloodshed. Only the form of vengeance demanded by his mistress repelled him ; and when Madame de Châteauroux abandoned these bloodthirsty notions, these clamours for heads, on which her heart was, perhaps, but little set, which, perhaps, were only on her lips for the sake of dramatic effect, she had not to trouble herself with lengthy negotiations in order to persuade the King to the severe measures which would satisfy her vanity. The King sacrificed to her the Dauphin's governor, the Duc de Chatillon, who was bringing up the King's son in a disgust for his father's amours. He sacrificed to her the Duc de Bouillon, La Rochefoucauld, Balleroy, Fitz-James, Pérusseau, who were all sent into exile or punished with disgrace. None the less, the imperious Duchesse dreamt of more prodigious satisfactions : she wished to return in triumph to a conquered and decimated court, and demanded that the Princes of the Blood should share the exile of their partisans, in order that the expiation for Metz should be complete and the punishment of the faction a memorable example. The King had many a struggle with himself before he refused her this sacrifice. But where the fight was fiercest, where Madame de Châteauroux centred her fury, was round Maurepas. Madame de Châteauroux insisted on his dismissal. The King was set upon keeping that minister, the only one who rendered the tedium of the Council tolerable to him, and the labour of government easy. At last, after long battles.

a compromise was arrived at ; Madame de Châteauroux allowed the King to retain Maurepas, but only on condition that she should be allowed to humiliate him, and that the manner and extent of his humiliation should be left to her good pleasure. And the treaty of reconciliation being thus concluded, Madame de Châteauroux returned to Paris to receive Maurepas, who was to inform her of her recall in person.

On the following day, the Council over, the King sent for Maurepas, gave him his instructions with his own lips, and bade him go to Madame de Châteauroux, convey his apologies to her and recall her to Versailles. Maurepas, who was not unprepared for the commission, asked the King to write down, in his presence, the message he was to take : "*It is already written,*" said the King, and handed him the form which Richelieu had previously sent to Madame de Châteauroux. Maurepas left Versailles at noon ; at four o'clock, the hour fixed by the King, he called upon Madame de Châteauroux. The porter, forewarned, told him that Madame de Châteauroux was not at home. Maurepas asked for Madame de Lauraguais, the porter made the same answer. Maurepas announced himself as coming on the King's business : he was admitted.

Madame de Châteauroux was in bed, with a cold and fever. There was a silence at first, whilst Madame de Châteauroux looked at Maurepas, without greeting him, without speaking, and offered up the sight and satisfaction of the minister's embarrassment to the resentment of her feminine vanity. Recovering himself speedily, Maurepas gave her the King's letter, and addressed her in these words : "The King sends me, Madame, to tell you that he has no knowledge of what passed with regard to you during his illness at Metz. He has always had the same esteem and respect for you. He begs you to return to court and resume your place, and Madame de Lauraguais likewise."

Madame de Châteauroux answered :

"I have always been convinced, Monsieur, that the King had no share in the manner in which I was treated. Thus I have never ceased to bear the same respect and attachment towards His Majesty. I am grieved that I am in no fit state to go and thank the King to-morrow, but I will go next Saturday, for I shall have recovered." What a full and infinite satisfaction in the proud woman's heart when Maurepas, with a zeal or an irony of abasement, hastened to offer his apologies if people had in any way prejudiced her against him, and humbled himself so far as to kiss her hand!¹ There is another account of the scene which deserves mention. According to Madame de Brancas, there were no words exchanged between the favourite and the minister beyond this single sentence of Madame de Châteauroux :

*"Give me the King's letters, and go away."*²

But this last triumph of Madame de Châteauroux had been given to her in short measure and with the measure of her days. She said : "I shall be well on Saturday!" . . . but it was death which was to raise her from the bed on which she had received the King's submission at the hands of the Prime Minister. She was suddenly seized with delirium and convulsions ; she uttered loud cries, began to wander ; her reason was clouded and only returned to her to throw her into those fits of piety which touched and disarmed the Père Segaud, her confessor, and Languet, from whom she received the Viaticum. Then came the terror of furious delirium which spent the strength and the breath of the sick woman in curses upon the man whom she accused of poisoning her—Maurepas. In the eleven days during which this terrible delirium was maintained almost without cessation, she was bled eleven times in the arm, the foot and the throat, but all this loss of blood did not succeed in mastering that furious death-agony and the rage of that exhausted body.

¹ *Mémoires du Maréchal de Richelieu.* Vol vii.

² *Fragment des Mémoires de la Duchesse de Brancas. Lettres de Lauraguais.*

There was no lack of pity or devotion around the sick-bed. The Princesses and the whole court came daily to inscribe their names at Madame de Lauraguais' door.¹ One friend of Madame de Châteauroux, the Duchess of Modena, was anxious to attend her to the very last. With her own hands she served her night and day. Madame de Flavacourt hastened to her sister's death-bed ; and it was in the arms of a rival who forgave her everything, in the arms of Madame de Mailly, that Madame de Châteauroux expired, at the age of twenty-seven, on Wednesday the 8th of December, at five o'clock in the morning.²

She died, in accordance with the prayer she had framed as a child, upon a feast of the Virgin, the day of the Conception. Two days later she was buried in the chapel of Saint Michel at Saint Sulpice, an hour before the customary time, with the watch under arms, in order to protect her coffin from the fury of the populace.

A strange and fatal death, and one which, in conjunction with so many other sudden disappearances from the great stage of Versailles, so many other sudden deaths, displays, behind the comedy, the folly and the smiles of that age, behind that enchanted carnival of pleasure, gallantry and wit, the suspicions and terrors of a sixteenth-century Italy! Accelerated ends, sudden dissolutions of young lives, upsettings of the fairest dreams, the strokes of Providence, in that age, have a character of violence which seems hardly attributable to anything else than the handiwork of man : here death seems really human, so jealous and precipitate does he exhibit himself! Princes, princesses, king's mistresses, are carried off so hastily and under such peculiar circumstances that one might say they were ravished by the shade of Locusta. Poison ! a poison silent and invisible, the *aqua Tofana*,—that is the great dread which is the legacy of the court of Louis XIV. to the court of Louis XV. Poison is the nightmare which

¹*Journal Historique du Règne de Louis XV.*, par Barbier. Vol. ii.
²*Mémoires Historiques de M. de B—*. Jourdain, 1807, vol. ii.

hovers round the death-beds of this eighteenth century, which, later on, is to see Louis XV. in the hands of a man accused of poisoning the Dauphin and a man accused of poisoning Madame de Châteauroux, of Choiseul and Maurepas!¹

Public imagination, already stirred by the death of Madame de Vintimille, after the death of Madame de Châteauroux could no longer hush the murmurs of its accusations. The accusers brought forward the denunciations of the dying woman, her definite statements to the effect that poison had been once before administered to her in a medicine at Rheims. They laid stress upon the half-day which Maurepas had spent in Paris, his employment of which was unknown. They talked of poisons, as subtle as the poisons of the Renaissance, secreted in the King's letter.

But these contemporary charges were no more than suspicions, the issue of passionate prejudices. The light possessed by history to-day makes it the historian's duty and right to judge them. For this, it is enough to report the opinion and testimony of Vernage, Madame de Châteauroux' physician. To the insinuations of poison Vernage answered by shrugging his shoulders. He related how, on her return from Metz, he had prescribed Madame de Châteauroux a cooling diet, distraction, exercise. But the Duchesse was unwilling to follow his advice. Entirely absorbed in the recollection of her disgrace, her resentment, her vengeance, she gave herself up to the fever of her projects and passions. A fortnight before her death, in compliance with the entreaties of her friends, Vernage had had a long and serious conversation with Madame de Châteauroux upon the subject of her health. He said to her: "Madame, you have no sleep, no appetite, and your pulse speaks of black vapours; your eyes look almost

¹ *Mémoires de Madame du Hausset* (published by M. F. Barrière). Lettre addressée à M. de Marigny (found amongst the MSS. of *Madame du Hausset's Journal*).—*Mémoires Historiques de M. de B*—. Jourdain, 1807, vol. ii.—*Vie Privée de Louis XV*. Peter Lyton. 1785, vol ii.

wild ; if you fall asleep for a few moments, you awake with a start ; this state of things cannot go on. Either you will go mad from the agitation of your mind, or some congestion of the brain will ensue,—or the accumulation of corrupt matters will give you a malignant fever." And Vernage impressed upon her the immediate necessity of being bled, and of attending to her health. The Duchesse promised Vernage, Richelieu, her friends, all who approached her, that she would take care of herself. But her great change of fortune, her reconciliation with the King, her emotions of joy and pride, her amorous imprudences at a dangerous moment brought about the realisation of the forecasts of medicine : it was a malignant fever, accompanied by delirium, which carried off Madame de Châteauroux. The post-mortem examination again confirmed the dictum of Vernage : it brought to light no other internal disorders beyond the dilation and sanguine swelling of the capillary vessels of the brain.

In addition to these material proofs, however, there are moral probabilities which fight even more victoriously in Maurepas' defence. The character of the minister sets him above or beneath an accusation of such a kind ; and his defence, a defence which is at the same time a sentence upon Maurepas, is amply found in this phrase of Caylus : "I will answer for it that he is even more incapable of crime than of virtue."¹ To go beyond this, to persist in a charge against which all the deductions which historical justice can draw from the man's moral attitude, and the externals of his soul protest, one must admit that there existed in the eighteenth century natures so superior as to be capable of concealing beneath indifference and irony, beneath the most charming and unaffected frivolity of conscience and manner, of sentiments and expressions, a second nature full of shadow and profundity, where remorseless passions worked for the accomplishment of

¹ Fragment des Mémoires de la Duchesse de Brancas. *Lettres de Laura-guais.*

noiseless crimes. Obviously, this would be a supposition of which the eighteenth century does not deserve the honour: its monsters are not so perfect, its villains are only *roués*.

Thus, of the sisters whom the King had loved, two were dead, tortured by their conviction of having been drugged to death, despairing and delirious, and she who survived, the first to have mingled the blood of the Nesles with the blood-royal, Madame de Mailly, condemned to live, and fain to envy the repose of Madame de Vintimille and Madame de Châteauroux, dragged out amidst contempt, regrets, austerities and religious mortifications, all that was left of an existence which had become no more than an expiation. After a few gleams of hope, speedily disabused by the King's cruel letters, "a remarkable monument of man's inhumanity," as the Prince de Tingry calls them, Madame de Mailly tore herself from the world, in order to cast herself upon God. Touched by a sermon of Père Renaud, that disciple of Massillon, who hailing, like his master, from Provence, brought to religion the tenderness and amorous enthusiasms of the South, she felt herself suddenly ravished and disgusted with herself by the gentle, penetrating words which spoke of the happiness of living with God. One day when she was to dine with Monsieur de la Boxière, where she was expected by the guests whom she had named, she sent word that she could not be present; and that same day there was news of Madame de Mailly's great renunciation: she abandoned paint and patches for ever. A transformation was effected in her, similar to those illuminations with which the historians of the first centuries of the Church regale us, as with living miracles. From that day forward, she devoted herself to an exemplary repentance; and on the Holy Thursday of the year 1743, the court and the populace crowded to the Gray Sisters of Saint-Roch to see Madame de Mailly, accompanied by the youthful widow of the Duc de La Tremouille, humbly perform the

washing of feet.¹ Her purse, her time, her soul were entirely given up to good works. Her one occupation was to visit the poor and prisons, and she ruined and despoiled herself so completely in charitable assistance, that at times she barely left herself two or three pieces of six livres for her personal necessities. This life of sacrifice and immolation lasted till 1751, the year in which Madame de Mailly died, wearing a hair shirt. Her universal legatee was her nephew, the King's son by Madame de Vintimille; the executor of her will, the Prince de Tingry, to whom she left a sum of 30,000 livres "*for what purpose he knew well.*" It was to pay the creditors, indifferently paid by the King and injured by his compromises.

She was buried, according to her desire, in the Cimitière des Innocents, amongst the poor, in the baser part of the cemetery, and a cross of wood was all the monument of her, who, having once deranged certain persons at Saint-Roch, and having been smitten by this expression: "Here is a pretty fuss about a w——!" had answered: "Since you know her, pray to God for her."

¹ *Chronique du Règne de Louis XV. Revue Rétrospective.* 1834, vol. v.

APPENDIX

THE manuscript department of the Bibliothèque Nationale possesses (S. F. 1134, *collection of autograph letters of the eighteenth century*) an unpublished correspondence between the Duchesse de Châteauroux and the Maréchal Duc de Noailles, whilst with the army in Flanders. We annex these letters which, in conjunction with the letter of Madame de Châteauroux, which we quoted from the Martin collection, and her correspondence with Richelieu, which we published from her autograph letters in the Bibliothèque of Rouen, is doubtless all of her autobiography which is extant.

“CHOISY, this 3rd of September 1743.

“I am well aware, Monsieur le Maréchal, that you have other things to do than read my letters, but, none the less, I flatter myself that you will manage to spare me a brief moment, not only to read this but to answer it ; this would be a mark of friendship of which I should be very sensible. The King has been kind enough to confide to me the suggestion you have made to him about joining the army ; but have no fear, woman though I am, I can keep a secret, I am quite of your opinion and think it would be very glorious for him, and there is no one but he capable of getting the troops into the condition it is desirable they should be in, since people's heads seem to me in a mighty bad way ; what with the alarm which is affecting almost everybody, it is true we are at a very critical point. The King feels that better than anybody, and as for his desire to go, I can answer that it is not lacking ; but, as for myself, what I should desire is that it should be generally approved, and that at anyrate he should reap the fruits that such a course merits. To make a

début must he not do something, and would it not be shameful to go there merely to rest on the defensive, and if, on the other hand, there should chance to be some affair with Prince Charles, it would not fail to be said that he had chosen the side where there seemed least likelihood of an action. Perhaps, I am giving you reasons which do not seem common sense; but at least I hope that you will tell me frankly that I do not know what I am talking about. Do not imagine that it is because I have no desire for him to go, for on the contrary, that would, firstly, be far from pleasing him, and in the second place, everything which may contribute to his glory and raise him above other Kings will be always to my taste. I believe, Monsieur le Maréchal, that, whilst I am about it, I can not do better than ask your advice generally on everything; I admit that the King starts for the army; he has not a moment to lose, and it ought to be done most promptly. What I would know is whether it would be impossible for my sister and myself to follow him, or at least, if we can not go to the army, be at some spot where we can have news of him daily. Have the kindness to tell me your ideas and to advise me, for I have no wish to do anything remarkable or aught which might recoil upon him and render him ridiculous. You see that I speak to you as to my friend, and one upon whom I can count; it is, perhaps, to show over-much presumption, but it is founded, Monsieur le Maréchal, on the sentiments of friendship and remarkable esteem which your *Refrain* has vowed to you while she lives. I think it is as well to tell you that I have asked the King's permission to write to you on these matters, and that it is done with his approval."

"At FONTAINEBLEAU, this 16th September 1743.

"I can not let the courier leave, Monsieur le Maréchal, without thanking you for your letter. I find it what it is, that is, it could not be better, and one could not show

more sense upon every point, even the last one ; however, Monsieur le Maréchal, I have colics which greatly need a cure, and I think the waters of Plombières would be marvellous, and only they can cure me. If it is not this year, at any rate next year. I can not go on any longer. Farewell, Monsieur le Maréchal, I wish you health, happiness and prosperity, and that with my whole heart. If the old Duke is still alive, I beg you to have the goodness to give him a thousand greetings from me."

"At VERSAILLES, this 11th May.

"How happy you are, Monsieur le Maréchal, you are with the King. How wretched is your *Refrain*, she is far away from the King, you can see the King all day long, I shall not see him, perhaps, for five months ; it is very distressing, but you will not pity me, for you have fair different things to think about, so that I do not expect it. I know your attachment to the King, thus I am in no anxiety as to the care you have for his person, one can depend upon you. Adieu, Monsieur le Maréchal, you must know what to think about the friendship I have so long vowed for you."

"At PLAISANCE, this 16th May 1744.

"I give you a thousand thanks, Monsieur le Maréchal, for the bulletin you have sent me. I am, I assure you, mighty touched at all your attentions. It gives me an opinion of the goodness of your heart, for the wretched excite your pity, and you do all you can to alleviate their troubles. I can answer that you will have your reward. In the meanwhile, accept, Monsieur le Maréchal, the assurance of my most sincere gratitude and most tender friendship.

"MAILLY, DUCHESSE DE CHATEAUROUX."

"At PLAISANCE, this 3rd June 1744.

"I could not thank you too much, Monsieur le Maréchal, for all your attentions and the marks of friendship you have given me. All that you tell me of the King enchants without surprising me. I was very sure, that as soon as he became known he would be adored—the two things are inseparable. I beg you to be convinced, Monsieur, of the true friendship your *Refrain* has vowed to you while she lives.

"THE D. DE CHATEAUROUX."

"At PLAISANCE, this 5th June 1744.

"I send you my compliments, Monsieur le Maréchal; this is a mighty agreeable beginning, for the siege has not taken long, and they say it has cost very few lives, and that is pretty enough, the King deserves to be fortunate being so ably seconded. The people who are attached to him can be easy, and the campaign will certainly be brilliant. No one, as you will well believe, desires it more than I, as I do, Monsieur, that you should be convinced of the true friendship I have vowed to you.

"THE D. DE CHATEAUROUX."

"I received your letter, Monsieur, by the courier. I am much obliged for it. All that you have told me enchants me."

"At LILLE, this 28th of June.

"It is your business, Monsieur le Maréchal, to capture towns; it seems to me you have only to look at them. I assure you that I congratulate you with all my heart, and that anything glorious and flattering which befalls you gives me extreme pleasure. You need not be surprised at this fashion of thinking, for it is long since you must have been aware of the true friendship which I bear you, Monsieur, and which will never change.

"THE D. DE CHATEAUROUX."

This last letter forms part of the autograph collection of M. Chambry, and was communicated to us by him.

BOOK II

MADAME DE POMPADOUR

IN the eighteenth century the *bourgeoisie* is no longer the people, enriched and enfranchised, without rights and without condition, to whose purses royalty and warfare are obliged to have recourse. From reign to reign it has waxed bigger. People under Philippe-le-Bel, it has become the third corps or order in the State under Philippe de Valois. And between Philippe de Valois and Louis XV. it wins everything, merits everything, buys everything, achieves everything; a truth unrecognised, and yet borne out by all the facts. Henri IV., Richelieu, Louis XIV., raise it up against the *noblesse*; and every day of the century which begins with the death of Louis XIV. and ends in the Revolution, enlarges its sphere in the State and gives it fresh domination. It fills the twelve parliaments, the courts of aids, the chambers of accounts. Positions in the judicature and the law, seneschalships and bailiffries devolve upon it. It represents a quarter of the officers in the army; in the Church it has a prodigious number of cures, canonries, chapels, prebendaries, secular abbeys. Administration is its patrimony. It supplies the commissioners of wars, the heads of the different offices, the subordinates in the victualling department, in the roads and bridges, clerks of every kind. From advocate to the Chancellor, the magistracy belongs to it absolutely. All the secretaryships of State seem to be its perquisite. The ministry and the councils of administration, from the sub-delegate to the intendant, from the official reporters to the sub-ministers, are its property and inheritance.

But above this direct authority, beyond the amassing of appointments, the snatching up of positions, the exercise and possession of almost all the powers in the State, the Third order in the Kingdom found in its genius and its capacity the source of an influence less immediate, but even loftier and more considerable. All the well-beloved glories of France, the greatest lustre of that age, arts and letters, brought it their popularity and gave it the moral government of public opinion. Nor was this enough for that domination of the Third Estate, of which 1789 was only to be the recognition, the publication, the legal and overwhelming consecration. The order of money, born of money, grown fat and successful through money, which had attained positions because positions were to be sold, ruled through the career open to money, commerce,—a commerce whose balance of forty-five millions was in favour of France. It ruled, above all, through that governing power of money, Finance, by which all the methods, all the resources, all the facilities of competence, of fortune, of elevation were at its beck and call. The army of fifty thousand men, which acted as guard, from the clerk to the farmer-general, to the receiver-general, to the treasurer, belonged to the Third Estate and to the Third Estate alone. The management of the revenues or of the credit of France gave it opportunities of amassing wealth in the most sudden manner and to the most surprising extent. Add up the millions of all those important personages, some arriving in Paris with a case of razors, some springing from a draper's or a cooper's shop, from a wine-shop at the port-à-l'Anglais : the Adines, the Bergerets, the Brissarts, the Bragousses, the Bourets, the Cazes, the Camuzets, the Dupins, the Durands, the Duchés, the Dangés, the Desvieux, the Dognys, the Fontaines, the Grimods, the Girards, the Haudrys, the Hocquarts, the Helvetins, the Malos, the Massons, the Micaults, the Roussels, the Savalettes, the Sauniers, the Thionards. . . . What is the *noblesse*, with its possessions, the land and the sword, with its honours and its privileges,

beside this vast party of Finance, which has the solid element of power, which holds the money of society and the money of the State, which marries its daughters to the greatest names, and which, in the very profession of the *noblesse*—in war—commands the plans of the generals to such effect that, all through the Seven Years' War, we see the projects and the battles ordered by a Duvernay? This Third Estate of farms and receipts is, actually, in the heart of the monarchy, a plutocracy with all its strength and all its splendour. It not only possesses all the political influence—already noticed by Saint-Simon—which wealth obtains over poverty; it also makes a display of the finest prodigality, the most lavish expenditure. Who owns the mansion proud amongst a score of mansions, the groves of oranges, the pictures of the old masters, marble tables selected with most care, the cabinets from Germany or China, enamelled caskets from Japan, of such singular lightness and perfume, wardrobes carved and moulded in such grand taste, furniture by such excellent craftsmen? Some extortioner! Who are the arbiters of elegance, the patrons of taste? The men who are, at once, the Mecœnases and the Medici of the age of Louis XV.: the farmers-general. And it seems as though one had before one's eyes the very image of that all-powerful and magnificent world, the triumph of finance, in the engraving of Pâris-Montmartel, seated so squarely and royally upon gold, surrounded by works of art, statues, bronzes, admirable tapestries, with all the serene and redoubtable aspect of a minister of money.¹) It was in the midst of these grandeurs, prosperities, and graces of finance, that a woman, born and bred in the *bourgeoisie* of finance, laid hold of a position

¹ *Mémoires de Saint-Simon.* Hachette, 1857, vols. xi and xiv.—*Du Gouvernement, des moeurs et des conditions en France avant la Révolution.* Senac de Meilhan, Hamburg, 1795.—*Lettres de L. B. Lauraguais à Madame **.* Paris, an x.—*Médailles sur la Régence, avec les Tableaux symboliques du Sieur Paul Poisson de Bourvalais, premier maltôtier du royaume.* A. Sipur, 1716.—*Genealogy of the Farmers-general, their Origin, Names, Qualities, Portraits and abridged Histories, between the years 1720 and 1756.* (Manuscript.)

which the *noblesse* was accustomed to consider as one of its privileges, and showed, by the fortune and the first example of a King's mistress without birth, a fresh encroachment of the *bourgeoise*, whose power she was about to make felt at Versailles.

After the loss of Madame de Châteauroux, the King sought in vain in the Queen, in the society of her friends, the habits of her life, for something which might bring him back and attach him to his wife's fireside. The husband found nothing in Marie-Leczinska, nothing in her entourage which promised him the happiness he desired, or society to his taste. After the agitations of grief, the tears which the King's first infidelities had caused her, the Queen's life had become even more pacific and lethargic. The humiliations put on her by the King, who would let her stand a long time before saying to her: "Be seated, Madame"; the privation of all influence, the most wanton shames and annoyances, her penury, which compelled her, all one summer, at Marly, to play with borrowed money, the haughtiness and imperious manners of the Duchesse de Châteauroux,¹ the long course of sorrows, immolations, anguish and sacrifices had prematurely aged and soured the temper of that Queen who wrote in so sad an accent: "The most innocent pleasures are not made for me." The rule of her life and the employment of her days had become severer, more austere: shut up in her own interior, far from the noise and bustle of Versailles, she only issued forth for State occasions or errands of charity, visits to the community of the Child Jesus, which embroidered for her, every year, in the Persian mode, the muslin garments she loved to wear.² It was as though, in the midst of that palace full of fever, frivolity and change, the hour which sounds, regular, slow and peaceful from a convent clock measured the monotonous existence of the wife of Louis

¹ *Mémoires du Maréchal Duc de Richelieu.* Vols. v. and vi.

² *Mercure de France.* August 1738.

XV. Mornings spent entirely in prayers and moral reading; mass; after mass, dinner; after dinner, work in her closets, tapestry, embroidery, works of benevolence, which are no longer the relaxation and occupation of leisure, but the task and labour of charity for which the poor wait, and which are done with haste—that is the regular order of her days. The distractions, the amusements of the early days of her marriage, her taste for music, the guitar, the viol, the clavicorde, are abandoned, and to-day historical readings carry her on till supper-time. After supper comes the animated, mundane moment of her day. She goes to the Duchesse de Luynes to derive her greatest pleasure, the pleasure which consists—it is herself who says it—"in being opposite Madame de Luynes, beside the table, in the delicious arm-chair, busy with Madame de Luynes." Deserted by her ladies, who run off to the private apartments, and to whom she has been forced to give a general leave of absence, it is here she finds her beloved little court of friends, the Duc and Duchesse de Luynes, the Duc and Duchesse de Chevreuse, the Président Hénault, Montcrif; and these are charming evenings for the poor Queen. But those reunions, already of old somewhat somnolent, have become to-day often enough, amongst those old and wearied personages, sleeping parties in company, interrupted, of a sudden, by the abrupt awaking of the Cardinal de Luynes asking "for the chapter to assemble," in a voice which stops the snoring of Tintamarre, the Duchesse de Luynes' old dog, infected nightly by the slumber of the salon.¹

Estranged thus from the Queen, repelled by the growing opposition of their tastes and pleasures, Louis XV. fell back upon transient amours, which did but distract his senses, without satisfying the essential man in him: the man of habit.

¹ *Mémoires du Duc de Luynes.* Didot, 1860; *Introduction par E. Soulié.*
—*Mémoires du Président Hénault.* Dentu, 1865.

At this time a young bride was greatly exercising the *bourgeois* world of Paris with the rumour of her talent, her wit, her beauty. Marvellous aptitude, a rare and learned education, had given this young woman all the gifts and graces which made of a woman what the eighteenth century called a *virtuosa*, an accomplished model of the seductions of her sex. Jeliotte had taught her singing and the clavicorde; Guibaudet, dancing; and her singing and dancing were those of a singer and dancer of the Opera. Crébillon, as a friend of the house, had taught her declamation and the art of speaking;¹ and Crébillon's friends had formed her young mind to the subtlety, the delicacy, the lightness of sentiment and irony of wit that was then in vogue. All the talents of grace seemed to meet in her. No woman was a better rider; none could dance more lightly; none more quick to excite applause with the notes of her voice or the strains of an instrument; none could more admirably recall the tone of La Gaussin or the accent of La Clairon; there was no one, again, who could tell a story in a more piquant way. And where others might compete with her in the field of coquetry, she took the palm over all by her genius of dress, by the turn she gave to a bow, the air she gave to the nothing which adorned her, the signature that her taste set upon all that she wore. And even in the familiar intimacy of the upper *bourgeoisie*, the great finance of the age, with the artists her dainty fingers had learned to hold a pencil, to engrave on copper, after the example of another daughter of finance, the kinswoman of the Crozats, Madame Doublet, whose clever drawings were engraved by Caylus and Bachaumont. Drawing-rooms disputed this admirable person. Samuel Bernard died regretting he had never heard her; and at Madame d'Angervilliers' it came about, curious hazard! that Madame de Mailly, carried away by her enthusiasm, flung herself into the arms of the musician, after hearing

¹ *L'Espion Américain, or Lettres Illinoises.* London, 1766.

a piece on the clavicorde, and carried back the emotion and warmth of her enthusiasm to the court, which heard the name of Mademoiselle Poisson for the first time.¹ To please and charm, Mademoiselle Poisson had again her face, a complexion of the most extreme whiteness, lips somewhat pale, but eyes with the vivacity of fire, glances which seemed of flame, and which veiled in lightning the languid air of her lymphatic nature, and the modelling of her features which lacked regularity. Again she had her magnificent chestnut hair, ravishing teeth, and the most delicious smile, which stamped upon her cheeks the two dimples shown us in La Jardinière's engraving; her figure, rounded but not large, curved admirably, her perfect hands, the play of gesture from all her vivacious, passionate body, and, above all, a mobile, varying physiognomy, marvellously animated, which the soul of the woman ceaselessly moved, and which, with incessant renewals, displayed, turn by turn, a moved or imperious tenderness, noble seriousness, or wanton graces.² This

¹ *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, par M. Charles Blanc, 1st August 1859.—*Madame de Pompadour*, par. A. de la Fizelière.

² There are a certain number of portrait engravings of Madame de Pompadour in existence. We will mention the following:—the portrait known under the title of *La Belle Jardinière*, with inscription: C. Vanloo, pinxit, J. L. Anselin sculpsit, engraved after the original painting which was at the château of Bellevue, and which is now in the possession of M. Fontanel, honorary associate and custodian of the prints in the Academy of Montpellier. In Paris, at Bassau and Poignant's Rue and Hotel Serpente;—a medallion portrait amongst the series of portraits by Cochin. Madame de Pompadour is in a *négligé*: the folds of a *peignoir* nestle round her bust and shoulders; her *chignon* is loose, and the hair crimped in morning fashion. It is one of the portraits of Madame de Pompadour in which the expression of her physiognomy is the wittiest, in which the smile of her glance and mouth, half opened in dainty laughter, best reveals the man of wit in the lovely woman. Beneath: Drawn by Cochin. Engraved by Aug. Saint-Aubin, 1764; and these verses:

*Avec des traits si doux, l'amour en la formant
Lui fit un cœur si Vrai, si tendre et si fidèle,
Que l'Amitié crut bonnement
Qu'il la faisoit exprès pour elle.*

MARMONTEL.

A portrait in a medallion surrounded with flowers, a lit torch is passed and overturned at one side. It is, doubtless, Madame de Pompadour when quite young, with a little ingenuous air, a sheepish profile, which we only find in

person, so seducing, so accomplished, crowned with so many graces and such perfection, had scarcely more than one fault: her birth. She had the misfortune and the bad taste to be the daughter of a M. Poisson, interested in the commissariat, whose peculations had driven him into exile, and of a Madame Poisson, daughter of one De La Mothe, contractor of provisions for the Invalides, whose gallantry has passed into a proverb.¹ At the moment of her birth, her mother was conducting a regular intrigue with M. Lenormand de Tournehem, who, deeming himself to have considerable share in the little Poisson's entrance into the world, provided for the cost of the young girl's magnificent education. It was not long before Mademoiselle Poisson was surrounded by a court of lovers; but the most ardent of her admirers was a

this picture of her. On the neck, a double string of pearls, the hair drawn up from the neck into a knot on the top of the head, like the crest of a helmet; beneath: Madame d'E. Marquise de Pompadour. Schenau *del.* Littrel *sc.*, 1764. Paris, at Guillau's, the bookseller, Rue Christine, *au magasin Littéraire*. A small portrait, without historical interest, which seems copied from a portrait of Madame de Châteauroux. As a goddess, with bare shoulders, the riband which holds up her mantle passing between her two breasts. At the foot: Queverdo *del.* Lebeau *sculpsit*;—another, of like value, and somewhat similar, with a different poise of the head, and another scroll-work of cypress and roses. Beneath: Natier *pinx.* Cathelin *sculps.* Blignier, gilder to the King, Cour du Manège;—a bust portrait, life-sized, representing her after Boucher, one arm passed through a basket of flowers, a rose in her bosom, a pink riband round her neck, engraved by Demarteau in the manner of a pastel. We must not forget the plates engraved after Vanloo, the two panels of Madame de Pompadour's bedroom at Bellevue: the Sultana working at her tapestry, and the Sultan taking coffee, which the critics of the Salon of 1755 declare to be the most speaking likenesses of the "fair Laure," and greatly superior, in resemblance, to Latour's portrait, now in the Louvre. There are, in addition, two portraits of Madame de Pompadour, published and engraved in England, in aquatint, after Boucher, which appear to be copies of a French print, lacking the name of the engraver. Madame de Pompadour is represented in these two engravings with singularly plump and coarse features. She wears a knot of pearls in her hair, and around her bared bosom stray negligently the folds of a chemise, over which is thrown a mantle fastened by a cameo. Beneath the larger of these two aquatints: F. Boucher *pinxit.* J. Watson *sculp.* Madame la Marquise de Pompadour, died 1764. Amongst the lithographs, a portrait of Madame de Pompadour, in the *Iconographie* of Delpech, drawn on the stone by Belliard, after a picture in the cabinet of M. le Chevalier Lenoir, shows us, beneath a hood, the well-known type of the Marquise, but fuller, and, to use one of the expressions of the model, more *chubby*.

¹ *Histoire de Madame la Marquise de Pompadour.* London, S. Hooper, at the Cæsar's Head.

nephew of M. Lenormand de Tournehem, M. Lenormand d'Étioles. The arrangements for a family marriage were soon settled without any difficulty.

M. Lenormand de Tournehem gave up the half of his property to his nephew, with the promise of the other half after his death; and Mademoiselle Poisson became Madame d'Étioles.¹ She entered upon the fortune of her husband without embarrassment, and took possession, with perfect ease, of the charming estate of Étioles, in the government of Sens, where the young bride reorganised and recalled the society of Madame Poisson, and M. de Tournehem, Cahusac, Fontenelle, the Abbé de Bérnis, Maupertuis and Voltaire, who will later remind the Marquise, in a letter, of the wine of Tokay drunk at Étioles. Madame d'Etioles had married with the utmost coldness and reason. She was quite indifferent to her husband's passion, seeing him as he was, short, fairly ugly, and badly built. Marriage, moreover, to her was neither an aim nor an end; it was a state of transition and a means. A fixed ambition which had dazzled her childish instincts, her dreams as a young girl, filled her aspirations as a woman. The first impressions of her imagination, the credulous beliefs and superstitions which were in her, represented the frailty of her sex, the promises of the fortune-tellers to whom later she will hie secretly from Versailles to consult the future; the cynical and insolent hopes which issued from the lips of her mother in view of the grace and talents of her daughter, her nature and her education predestined Madame d'Étioles to become "a king's morcel." In her heart, as in the heart of Madame de Vintimille, there grew and germinated a rooted plan of seduction, the great project of an enormous fortune; and we have proof of this secret thought of Madame d'Étioles' premeditation in the curious accounts

¹ M. Sainte-Beuve, in his *Causeries de Lundi*, gives the *état civil* of Madame de Pompadour thus: Jeanne-Antoinette Poisson, born the 29th December 1722, in the parish of Sainte-Eustache; married the 9th March 1741—died the 15th April 1764;—buried on the 17th.

recently published. We read in the list of pensions, made by Madame de Pompadour : *600 livres to Madame Lebon, for having predicted to her, when nine years old, that she would one day become the mistress of Louis XV.*¹ That was the starting-point of Mademoiselle de Poisson's dream.

It begins with the gipsy's prophecy, uttered on the threshold of life, as at the opening of a novel. Thence-forward Madame Lebon's auspicious forecast takes possession of her; and for all her smile, it is in no jesting mood that she says, that once married, no one in the world save the King shall make her unfaithful to her husband.

Madame d'Étioles caught sight of the King at Versailles : her whole life hinges on being seen, noticed by him. To this pursuit of a glance from Louis XV. she brings the labour of all her ideas, her time without counting it ; to it she consecrates all the liberty and facility afforded her by a husband who is in bondage to her caprices, submissive to her slightest wish. At Étioles she throws herself in the King's way in the forest of Sénart, the meeting-place of the royal hunt ; she exposes herself to his curiosity, tempts him in the daintiest of costumes ; she flutters before his eyes that fan, upon which, it is said, some rival of Massé had depicted Henri IV. at Gabrielle's feet.² She passes and repasses in the midst of the horses, dogs, and escort of the King, like some light and alluring Diana, now clad in azure, in a rose-coloured phaeton, now in an azure-coloured phaeton, clad in rose. The King looked at her, remarked her, and took a pleasure in the handsome equipage which set the court a-talking. One day, when the Duchesse de Chevreuse is talking to the King of the "little d'Étioles," the Duchesse de Châteauroux drew near her noiselessly and trod so heavily on her foot that Madame

¹ Account of the expenses of Madame de Pompadour. Manuscript in the archives of the Préfecture of Seine-et-Oise, published by M. A. Leroy.

² *L'Espion Américain.*

de Chevreuse was hurt. On the following day, Madame de Châteauroux, during the visit of apology she paid her, let fall, with a negligent air, the question: "Do you know that they are trying to force the little d'Étioles on the King, and are only seeking for the means?"¹ Nor did Madame de Châteauroux stop short there: she gave Madame d'Étioles to understand that she was to appear no more at the King's hunt. Madame d'Étioles resigned herself to waiting for the death of Madame de Châteauroux before she ventured on any fresh attempt. The great masked ball given every year on the Sunday before Lent, at the Hôtel de Ville, gave her an opportunity of approaching the King, towards the end of February 1745. Louis XV. was attacked by a charming mask who tormented him with a thousand provocations, a thousand pretty sayings. At the King's entreaty, the domino consented to unmask, and the handkerchief which Madame d'Étioles dropped, as though by accident, when she raised her mask, was picked up by Louis XV., to the accompaniment of this murmur amongst the company: "The handkerchief has been thrown."²

Some days later, if the biographers of the time are to be believed, when retiring to bed one night, the King unbosomed himself to Binet upon the disgust he derived from those amours without a morrow, his weariness of chance women and connections of caprice. He confided to him his repulsion towards Madame de Popelinière, who was pushed to the front and maintained by Richelieu, towards the Duchesse de Rochechouart, afterwards Comtesse de Brionne, whom a court intrigue sought to foist on him, and of whom the scurvy tongues at court said jestingly that "she was like the horses in the small stables, always being offered, never accepted."³ Binet, who was distantly related to Madame d'Étioles, then spoke to the

¹ *Mémoires du Maréchal Duc de Richelieu.* Vol vii.

² *Vie Privée de Louis XV.* Londres, Peter Lyton, vol. ii.

³ *Ibid.*

King of a person who could not fail to please him, and who had, from her very childhood, cherished the most tender sentiments towards the King of France. And Binet reminded Louis XV. of the woman of the forest of Sénart, the woman of the masked ball. He revived his memories, appealed to the recollection of his heart and eyes with so much eloquence, skill and fire, that the King authorised him to ask for an appointment. The appointment was granted.¹

A month elapsed. The King held his tongue. He seemed deaf to the allusions of Binet and of Bridge, one of his equerries, and a strong friend of Madame Étioles. Notwithstanding, the intrigue started by Binet, in concert with that indefatigable intriguer, Madame de Tencin, who had staked upon Madame d'Étioles' chances,—the first rendezvous had not taken place without exciting comment. It came to the ears of Boyer, the Dauphin's tutor, who had been delivered over by Madame de Châteauroux to the sarcasms of Voltaire. Boyer openly threatened Binet that he would have him dismissed by the Dauphin. He set himself against the evil example which would be derived from the acknowledgment of a mistress accused of irreligion, whose youth had been spent in the society and the school of Voltaire, Fontenelle, Maupertius. But Madame d'Étioles had already a following amongst the King's intimates. They aroused Louis XV. with their suggestions, their remarks, the incitements they made to his vanity. They pointed out to him the affectation of the young Dauphine, in refusing to appear any longer in the private apartments, in consequence of the indecorous judgments her husband passed upon the King's conduct. They irritated him against what was censorious and insulting in this observation, and pointed out to him the feebleness he would show in submitting to the intrigues of his son's tutor, the lessons of his menials. One

¹ *Histoire de Madame la Marquise de Pompadour.—Mémoires du Maréchal Duc de Richelieu.* Vol. viii.

night the King asked Binet with a laugh what had become of his kinswoman. Louis XV. then admitted to his valet-de-chambre that she had pleased him, but added that he had thought to detect in her ambition and self-interest. Binet hastened to answer that Madame d'Étioles was madly in love with the King, and that, as her husband had conceived suspicions of her first fault, nothing was left her but to die of despair, in order that she might not survive the King's love, and to deceive the resentment of a man who adored her. The King declared that he would be charmed to see her a second time; and a second interview took place on the 22nd of April 1745. Madame d'Étioles was invited to sup in the private apartments with Luxembourg and Richelieu, who treated her coldly enough, omitted to praise her beauty or applaud her witty conversation. But this time, Madame d'Étioles, forewarned by Binet, dissembled her ambitions and the character which had alarmed the King: she put a rein upon her soul, and was no more than the amiable woman the King desired her to be.

Binet had spoken the truth: the night spent away from the conjugal bed had opened the eyes of the poor husband who, being sincerely and passionately in love, threatened, in the first violence of his resentment, his shame and his sorrow, to proceed to extremities. Taking advantage of these threats, the jealous storms which awaited her at home, Madame d'Étioles played the part of a woman in a state of terror, and her fears moved the King, who allowed her in the morning to hide herself in the former apartment of Madame de Mailly. It was from there that, mistress of the man and the position, holding the King all day by her love and her caresses, the wife of M. d'Étioles extracted from the King, successively, a lodging, the promise of her acknowledgment, the promise of her husband's banishment, the promise of protection against the cabal of the Dauphin. And a few days later she further obtained from the King the assurance that she

should be installed, acknowledged as titular mistress in Easter week, in order that her triumph might be shown publicly to involve that absolute independence from the principles of the Dauphin which she exacted from the King.

After that, soaring forth suddenly in that Versailles whither she had crept so humbly, Madame d'Étioles, without being in any way disturbed by the approach of greatness, made her *début* by a master-stroke. Realising that any compromise between the Dauphin and herself was impossible, she sought to diminish his following and forces, by disarming the Queen with her caresses, her submission, her careful efforts to be pleasant to her on all occasions. She played an admirable comedy to her, saying that people had injured her in her opinion, speaking of "a week's incomparable sorrow," and that with so moved an accent, a display of her graces so calculated to deceive and touch the Queen, that the Duchesse de Luynes came, on behalf of Marie-Leczinska, to assure Madame d'Étioles of her kindly feelings to her.¹ It was such a new thing to the Queen to meet with consideration from one of her husband's mistresses!

The King, captivated, enthralled, succumbed to the bondage of this new amour, and by the 9th of July 1745 Madame d'Étioles could exhibit with pride eighty love-letters of the King, sealed with the device "*discreet and faithful*," which he had written to her since the beginning of May, when he had set off to become the conqueror at Fontenoy. At last, on the King's return—his long absence with the army had delayed her presentation—Madame d'Étioles was presented to the court (14th September 1745) at six o'clock, in the King's apartment, before a vast company which filled chamber and ante-chamber, and whose curiosity derived pleasure from the excessive embarrassment of the King and the mistress. Madame

¹ *Histoire de Madame de Pompadour.—Mémoires du Maréchal Duc de Richelieu.* Vol. viii.

d'Étioles was escorted by the Princesse de Conti, who had played such a large part in the King's intrigue with Madame de Mailly, and whose prodigality, the disorders of her household, whose debts and whose husband's debts, had cast for these such complaisant rôles. She was accompanied by Madame de La Chaumontauban, and her cousin, Madame d'Estrades. From the King's apartment, Madame d'Étioles repaired to the Queen, where a host of curious persons, even more numerous than had been present at the King's, were thronged in expectation. Great was the astonishment of the courtiers, who were ignorant of Madame d'Étioles' skilful manœuvre, when, instead of some meaningless compliment upon her gown, the Queen, reminding the newly-presented mistress of one of the few women of the great noblesse with whom she was intimate, said to her: "*Pray, have you any news of Madame de Saissac? I was very pleased to have met her sometimes in Paris.*" Touched at such noble charity, Madame d'Étioles stammered out this sentence: "*Madame, my greatest passion is to please you.*" But the Dauphin was faithful to his part: as it had been previously arranged, he paid Madame d'Étioles a few frigid compliments upon her toilette.¹

At the time when Madame de Mailly became the mistress of Louis XV., public opinion declared, in the mouth of the chronicler, Barbier, "that nothing could be said, the name of Nesle being one of the greatest names in the kingdom." Compare with this dictum, meaningless to-day, the sentiment which greets the arrival of Madame d'Étioles, who assumed in the year of her presentation the name of an extinct family, the title of Marquise de Pompadour, and you will have the measure of an extinct prejudice, a prejudice of which our age has lost the very meaning. This amorous mésalliance of the King, the novelty of a *parvenu* mistress, of a woman bearing no

¹ *Mémoires du Maréchal Duc de Richelieu.—Mémoires du Comte de Maurepas.* Buisson, 1792, vol. iv.

great name, raised to the administration of the royal favour, the installation at Versailles of this *grisette*, this *tradeswoman*—it is the expression of a republican of the Monarchy, of the Marquis d'Argenson—met from the very first with such contemptuous hostility, such obstacles, in the traditions of the court, the very habits of the nation, that for a moment it was thought the mistress would be unable to maintain her position. All the haughty jealousy innate in the aristocracy, all its contemptuous hatred for the enriching and aggrandisement of the middle classes, was directed against the little *bourgeoise* who had been so insolent as to usurp a heart whose frailties were the property of women of birth and of the world of Versailles. The scandal was not only a scandal, it was a breach of privilege; and hence the explosion and vehemence of discontent from the whole of that court, wounded, outraged, and, as it were, insulted by the insolent success of Madame d'Étioles. There is an immediate organisation of a conspiracy of espionage and calumny. The women are all eyes, exercise the most piercing and malicious qualities of their spirit of observation, to penetrate the woman to the bottom. They spy, study, analyse her tone, her manners, her language, until they have found the foot of clay within the goddess: the lack of that distinction which is not taught or acquired, but is handed down like a natural tradition in the blood of a caste—the lack of race. The most malicious tongues, the most redoubtable scoffers, the most impudent rakes take up arms against her, accentuate her smallest inadvertences, her slightest breaches of etiquette, and, above all, the expressions she has not had time to forget on her journey from Paris to Versailles.

And is it not easy for them to attack this woman who brings familiar nicknames to court, who calls the Duc de Chaulnes “my pig,” and Madame d'Amblimont, “my rag-bag,” the vulgar tongue, a sort of familiar, popular speech which is one day to bestow on the daughters of Louis XV.

the strange pet names with which their father will baptise them? A league is started to arouse the King's mocking instincts against the mistress, to discredit her, in the name of distinction, and to make the self-love of the lover blush for such an amour. The courtiers are so successful in their feigned astonishment at the nothings which fall from the favourite, at all that is over "free" in her speech and betrays her origin, that they extort from the embarrassed and quite shame-faced King this confession: "It is an education which it will amuse me to complete." Madame de Lauraguais, that wittiest of women, deceived in her hopes and supplanted, dismantles the little *bourgeoise* who has stolen the King from her, from head to foot, omitting not a gesture, dissects her, passes her from one hand to another like a stripped doll, and delivers her to the laughter of the gallery. The royal family, sensible to the humiliation of such a *liaison*, sulks and murmurs against the mistress who has detracted from the *honour* of the King's adultery. On that side of the court, they make a point of not speaking to Madame d'Étoiles at the hunt, even of not replying to her questions; and disdain, in the somewhat rough nature of the Dauphin, almost becomes brutality.¹ It is not long before the court infects the public with its hatred; the whispers of Versailles reach the street, the very populace, and unloose curiosity and insult. The malice of the nation peers into the foulness of Madame d'Étoiles' cradle and the ignominy of her origin. A cluster of furtive, flying leaflets falls around that rotten tree—the genealogical tree of Mademoiselle Poisson. It is one of those floods of songs and libels which, at certain moments in her history, relieve the gall of France. They spring up everywhere, these *Mazarinades* of the eighteenth century; the *Poissonnades* which fling at the forehead and the heart of Madame

¹ *Mémoires et Journal inédit du Marquis d'Argenson.* Janet, 1857, vols. iii. and iv.—*Mémoires Historiques et Anecdotes de la Cour de France.* Bertrand, 1802.—*Catalogue de Lettres Autographes.* *Lettres de Madame de Pompadour.*

d'Étioles the double shame of her birth—her father, her mother.¹

Maurepas, faithful to his part of enemy to the King's mistresses or wives, led the war against the favourite. He was the soul of the satires which filled Paris and Versailles. Relying on that great power, the witty tribunal, which he held with Pont de Veyle and Caylus, even more redoubtable with him through those supper parties, where all the best society thronged, and where his genius for caricature, his vein of irony, spurred by the stimulus of wine, gave, amidst the freedom which attends the end of a repast, a comedy so admirably played, spoken, mimicked, gesticulated, of the airs, manners, tricks of Madame d'Étioles, Maurepas, that high-chancellor of ridicule and of the regiment of La Calotte, was of all the favourite's enemies the one who knew how to inflict the most grievous wounds, and to strike the woman most surely and pitilessly in the most intimate part of her vanity, her frailties, even to the very secrets of her body, her health, her temperament.

Madame de Pompadour was not ignorant of the dangers of this malicious war which might strike such a formidable blow at her favour by gaining the smile of the King's ironical mind. In order to resist the hostilities of Maurepas, to put herself on guard against the prejudices of his colleagues, the Comte D'Argenson, Machault and Orry, the Controller-General, she sought allies and made friends. She acquired the support of a Prince of the Blood, the Prince de Conti, whom she attached to the interest of her fortunes, by flattering his secret ambitions, by promising to arrange the marriage of Madame Adelaïde and his son. She surrounded herself with the devotion of those State financiers, the brothers Paris, from whom she received great services before becoming Marquise de Pompadour. She made them her men and her maintainers, by

¹ *Manuscript Collection of Maurepas.* Vols. xxxiv. and xxxv. Bibliothèque Nationale. See Appendix A.

fortifying the King—so alarmed and annoyed at financial embarrassments—in the belief that only they, with their calculations, ideas, experience, were capable of furnishing the money necessary for the needs of the war. With her words and all her efforts she furthered the proud plans, the haughty audacity, the mobile and enraged policy of those real masters of the wealth of France, whose imagination contemplated successively the ruin of Austria, Holland, and Russia. She concealed with all the resources of her ability the extravagance and heritage of debt involved in this system, which ruined the provinces, but always found money for the King and Paris. She made the King and the Council lend an ear to the ideas of Duvernay, with whom she acquired credit through the eloquence and apparent good-nature of Marmontel. She incessantly dilated to the King on the uneasiness, the loss of public credit which would ensue, if these men were to fall; and by giving them on every occasion and at every hour the authority of her friendship, the succour of her protection, allying herself with them even to intimacy, entering into their families, where she brought peace, she made them auxiliaries at her orders, the foes of her foes; and it was with their aid that she overthrew the Controller-General, Orry, who was opposed to her expenses, and even less favourably disposed towards her than towards the Duchesse de Châteauroux. To the credit of the brothers Paris, so solid in a court that was at once impecunious and extravagant, Madame de Pompadour joined the great name of the Noailles, which was at the disposal of all the favourites. In the ministry, she had at her disposition the ardour and subtlety of the Duc de Saint-Severin, who was looked upon by the public as the one diplomatist of his time; the Marquis de Puysieux, with his gentle manners and his polite virtues, belonged to her entirely; and through him she acquired Jannelle, the head of the office for the intercepting of letters, a power who surrendered to the favourite, and permitted her to make the

post say what she wished, and nothing but that she wished to the King. In the ministry, Boulogne also belonged to her.¹

After having thus assured her defences, Madame de Pompadour sought to disarm Richelieu. Richelieu, who had made overtures to Madame de Flavacourt, with a view of inducing her to take over the heritage of her sister, Madame de Châteauroux; Richelieu, who had been in the habit of choosing the King's mistresses, made no secret of his ill-will towards the new favourite. He no longer simply sulked with her, as at the first interview; and the manifestations of his antipathies went beyond coldness and silence. Emboldened by his natural assurance, encouraged by the need the King seemed to feel for his presence, and original gaiety, the favourite took a pleasure, at the little suppers, in twitting and defying the displeasure of the mistress. It was in vain that Madame de Pompadour begged the King not to invite him; Richelieu persisted in making an appearance on their journeys to La Celle and La Muette; the whole time, it seemed his game to thwart and contradict the mistress in everything, and in this zeal to make himself unpleasant to her, he went so far, it is said, as to dance over her head all one night when she was indisposed. Teasing, ironies, all the spitefulness of this spoilt courtier were tolerated by the King, who seemed to revenge himself on his own weakness by allowing his mistresses to be tormented, by tormenting them, when necessary, himself, as when, for instance, he would bring them the sermons of Massillon, and professing to be touched, give himself the malicious pleasure of reading them aloud to them. On recognising this character of the King, and the strength of Richelieu, Madame de Pompadour imposed silence on her resentment, and soon a reconciliation, or rather a patched-up peace, assured her, if not of an alliance,

¹ *Mémoires et Journal inédits du Marquis d'Argenson.* Vols. iii. and iv.
—*Mémoires du Maréchal Duc de Richelieu.*

at least of Richelieu's neutrality in the struggle for which she was preparing.¹

To work and scheme at Versailles ; to please, seduce, captivate ; to collect allies, win the staunchest supports and the warmest friendships ; to surround herself with a people of creatures, to attach a host of interests to her nascent favour ; to employ the smiles, the amiability, and all the sorceries of woman, in order to enter into the intimacy of the women, the confidence of the ministers, the sympathies of individuals, and the familiarity of the court ; to make the greatest families in France condescend to complaisance ; to appease and win over the humour and honour of the courtier ; to attack consciences, reward capitulations ; to organise around the mistress a rivalry in devotion and abasement, by a lavish prodigality of the favours of the master and the money of the State ;—such is the great occupation of Madame de Pompadour. But there is a far heavier task : to occupy the King, arouse him, stir him, dispute him incessantly, day by day and hour by hour, with *ennui*.

When a civilisation attains its last and most extreme boundary, when a world is in the full expansion of an exquisite corruption, and has realised the ideal of social life in all its delicacy, all its graces, all its refinements ; when all has been accomplished in the laws and manners of a people to give the most charming image of a polished society, a strange ill befalls humanity. It is neither the anguish which precedes a year 1000, nor those uneasy feelings which overrun the Empire and herald in new gods : it is neither the expectation of the night, nor the presentiment of dawn. The ill which seizes humanity, amid this complete enjoyment of itself, is a flat and infinite lassitude, a something, I know not what, depriving things of savour, life of its surprise, an absolute sense of satiety, the disenchantment of the will and the desire. This strange sickness is the moral malady of the

¹ *Mémoires du Marquis d'Argenson.* Vol. iii.

eighteenth century. The human soul without an abiding place, having nothing on which to fix itself, detached from all that possesses and fills it, from everything like a faith or a devotion, the human soul grows very weary. *Ennui*—that is at the heart of this century, so full when one glances at it, of light and gaiety, vivacity, eagerness to live; so filled, when one examines it, of discouragement, of languor, deeps and sombre sides—*ennui*, that melancholy of the wit, is the great wretchedness of that age of wit where all is wit, even the heart. “My son has a foolish heart” (*le cœur bête*) is a saying of D’Argenson. No sooner do these men and women, so volatile, so superficial, so frivolous, find themselves alone and unburden themselves, than they confess with groaning to the void and aridity which is left between two suppers by the debauch of caprice and the libertinage of the intellect. And this *ennui* of the age is so special an ailment, a morbid state of character so prominent and so violent, that the age gives it a new name, a stupendous name. Read the letters of Madame du Deffant, the letters of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, those psychological confessions with so true an accent, so contemporary a tone; at every moment, to paint their depression and the dolorous slumber of their bad hours, they cry: “I have fallen into nothingness . . . I fall back into nothingness . . .” as though, in order to christen the *ennui* of the eighteenth century, it needed nothing less than that word: *nothingness*—(*néant*)—the infinity of nothing!

Ennui is at the top of that world, it is at its base. It breathes over the whole nation like a destructive breeze poisoning human illusions. In the people itself, *ennui* is manifested brutally: by suicide; we see two soldiers deserting life in company, solely out of curiosity about death, and in order to see the other side of life, the curtain rise upon some other comedy. As we go higher up in society, *ennui* increases. The ill grows greater in the aristocracy of birth, of riches, of intellect, until at last,

at the summit of that society, we see *ennui* incarnate in the King.

Louis XV., indeed, is the great example of *ennui*, as he is its greatest victim. This representative of the humanity of his time, who sums up in so perfect a historical type its sufferings and its weaknesses, this master, made after the image of the France of the eighteenth century, lives and reigns, devoured and torn by disgust, lassitude, a supreme apathy. *Ennui* is the sovereign's evil genius. It strikes all the fortunate gifts of his nature with impotence ; it debases his intelligence into wit, and it makes his biting and piquant wit sceptical and sterile ; it ages, disarms and extinguishes his will ; it stifles his conscience as well as his kingly appetites. In a word, it degrades, to the point of indifference, that sovereign who escapes from his history and abdicates France. The Abbé Galliani said of Louis XV. that he played that sorriest of parts, the part of a King, with the utmost possible distaste for it : and there we have the whole portrait of the monarch. Strange contrast ! After that superb player of royal authority and majesty, so noble, passionate, convinced, heroic, after Louis XIV., this Louis XV. who seems no longer the actor but the audience of royalty ; this Louis XV. who gazes at everything from that observatory and sheltered height which the warriors of the day called a *Mont-Pagnote* : "Ah ! Sire," said the Marquis de Souvry to him, "it is a place where you will be mighty badly off, your ancestors never built a house there !" Would one not believe, at moments, that he assists at his reign as at some solemn ceremony, inevitable and insupportable, or rather, as at some bad play ? He yawns and he whistles. But the man who lies behind the King, the man who is so thoroughly betrayed by the monarch, the man in Louis XV. is an abyss of *ennui*. *Ennui* actually possesses him. *Ennui* is the demon, the official torturer of his sluggish existence, his heavy hours, his indolent and spleenful humour, his

withered and egoistic heart. Everything with him, his very passions even, have their origin in *ennui*, and succumb in *ennui*, to such an extent that this history we are writing, this history of a king's amours is the history of one man's *ennui*.

Here we have the great secret of Madame de Pompadour's favour, and the great cause of that long domination which only death could terminate. She had the genius, the patience and the wit, if not absolutely to distract, at least, to caress, alleviate, and amuse the King's malady. She took him away from his sufferings with a more cunning charity, with a lighter touch than any other mistress. A more thorough intuition into the King's moral temperament, a more skilled and delicate tact for his nervous sensibility, a greater knowledge of all the chords of his character; the rare quality of giving to everything she was, everything she touched, to her beauty as to pleasure, a charm of newness, the seduction of surprise; a lively imagination, a varied and subtle wit, an animated and discursive power of conversation, this knowledge and these gifts made Madame de Pompadour the most admirable and excellent of instruments to lull the *ennui* of a Louis XV. And it was she who, by the succession of distractions, the continuity of movement, the variety which saves habit from insipidity, by novelty, agitation, guidance, brought the greatest oblivion and solace to the King's soul, procured him the least transient deliverances, the longest fits of energy, and best renewed in him the taste for life.

Madame de Pompadour takes possession of the existence of Louis XV. She annexes him, kills all his time for him. She deprives his hours of their monotony. She employs and accelerates his days. She drags him by a thousand pastimes from that eternity of *ennui* which stretches between a morning and an evening. She fills and occupies him, without leaving him for a moment, without allowing him to fall back upon himself. She carries him off from

work, disputes him with the ministers, hides him from ambassadors, snatches him from royalty. She will have his gaze free from the cloud or the care of business, his mind from the shadow of a preoccupation or the fatigue of a reflection. She lulls the master to sleep, as though he held some divine sinecure, saying to Maurepas, when about to read his reports to the King:—"Come now! Monsieur de Maurepas, you are making the King look yellow. . . . Adieu, Monsieur de Maurepas." And when Maurepas is gone, she takes back the King, smiles upon the lover, diverts the man. These are puerilities, delicious coaxing ways, whose fashion and fascination are her secret alone; or else her charming voice warbles some charming air, or her fingers awake music from the clavicord; or else, like another Scherrezade, she smoothes the lines of business from the King's forehead with one of those piquant narratives, one of those gay and lively stories, one of those romances but freshly cut, some one of those thousand and one nights of the eighteenth century which she relates so well. She holds Louis XV., she marches him about and carries him with her from diversion to diversion. She stirs and shakes up his apathy by an incessant invention of distractions and dissipations, by a daily creation of pleasure, by change of scene and rapidity, by excursions which send the pavements flying, a vagabond course of journeys with the briefest of sojourns, by that going and coming from Paris to Fontainebleau, from Bellevue to La Celle, from La Celle to Compiègne; mad and enchanted hurricane of a life ever driven and ever changing, in which the favourite sweeps and stupefies the thought and the body of Louis XV.¹ Then, when all these pleasures were exhausted, Madame de Pompadour thought to divert

¹ *Mémoires de Madame du Hausset*, publiés par M. F. Barrière. Baudouin, 1824.—*Mémoires et Journal d'Argenson*.—*Mémoires du Maréchal Duc de Richelieu*.—*Fastes de Louis XV.* A Villefranche, Chez la Veuve Liberté, 1782.

her lover by a new pleasure which no mistress of Louis XV. had as yet conceived.

For several Lents, already, in order to enliven the King's piety and his remorse, Madame de Pompadour had arranged his Holy Week for him after the pattern of an opera : she offered him spiritual concerts in her apartments, and grand motets, in which she sang herself, with Madame Marchais, Madame de l'Hôpital, Madame de La Salle, the Vicomte de Rohan ; Monsieur D'Ayen the younger, who were supported by the finest voices in Paris, Mademoiselle Fel and Géliotte, and the musicians of the Cabinets. But this was only an experiment to pave the way ; and with these mundane canticles, which soothed, for an instant, the melancholy of the King, Madame de Pompadour was preparing him for the distraction of the theatre. The theatre, with its various resources, its changing spectacle, its speaking illusions, with its magic, its interest, all the hold it has over the mental and physical attention, must it not be, in the eyes of Madame de Pompadour, the surest and happiest means of interesting the King's senses, reviving his imagination, of making him live for a few hours afar from the realities and business of his royal life, in the enchanted deception of an animated fiction and a living dream ? What better thought, indeed, could occur to the mind of a favourite in order to offer to a King what Pascal calls a King's greatest felicity : the diversion from himself and release from thoughts of himself ?

Moreover, it was not merely the interests, it was also the instincts of Madame de Pompadour which led her to the theatre. Her mind, as her graces, were of their age, of that age, possessed, even in the lowest ranks of the middle classes, by the passion for the comedy of society. The tastes of the woman then were in harmony with the calculations of the favourite, and no less than her desire to occupy the King and dominate the court, the recollection and the regret for her past successes impelled her to seek once more upon a royal stage the applause whose triumph

and joy had been hers upon the stage of Monsieur de Tournehem at Étoiles, upon the stage of Madame de Villemur at Chautemerle.

To fix the King's will it was sufficient to fix his curiosity. An easy task! to which all Madame de Pompadour's friends applied themselves with ardour. The Duc de Richelieu, who had seen Madame de Pompadour play at Chautemerle, the Duc de Nivernois and the Duc de Duras, who had played with her there, besieged the King's ear and filled his mind with words, notions of spectacle, comedy; they spoke to him of the talents of his mistress, of all the accomplishments, which she had not as yet had the opportunity or satisfaction of showing him. The King, interested and seduced, met the wishes of Madame de Pompadour; he smiled at the creation of a theatre in the private apartments. The stage was erected in the Cabinet of Medals. The pieces were chosen, the company formed, rehearsals organised. Madame de Pompadour associated the King with her energy, her labours; she made him share her impatience, triumphed over his antipathies; and it was a piece by Voltaire, *L'Enfant Prodigue*, which inaugurated this intimate theatre, where etiquette did not exist, and where, for the first time in France, the King's presence in person left the public free to its manifestations and permitted them to applaud. In the interval between the first and second performances of *L'Enfant Prodigue*, Madame de Pompadour produced *Le Méchant* of Gresset, which was still bidding for success with the Parisian public. Then to comedies succeeded operas, ballets, La Bruère's *Bacchus and Erigone*, Rebel's *Ismène*, La Garde's *L'Églée*, *La Surprise de l'Amour* and *Tancrède*, and the ballet of *L'opérateum Chinois*.¹

¹ Here is the cast of parts in a series of diversions, ballets, etc., performed before the King in the theatre of the private apartments at Versailles, and printed by express command of his majesty. In the *Lyre Enchantée*, the muse Urania was represented by Madame de Pompadour, Linus by the Marquis de La Salle, Cupid by Madame de Marchais, amongst the dancing personages, the Marquis de Courbanvaux played a faun. In *Adonis*, the part of Venus was played by Madame la Marquise de Pompadour; Cupid by Madame de

The theatre of the Cabinets was soon a perfectly organised and decorated theatre. Madame de Pompadour had appointed as director the Duc de La Vallière, the best organiser of comedies in France; as prompter, an abbé, her secretary and librarian, the Abbé de La Garde. The orchestra was a most excellent one; and Madame de Pompadour seated in it by the side of the King's professional musicians, the most renowned amateurs in the kingdom, the Prince de Dombes, Marlière's rival upon the bassoon, the Marquis de Souches so skilled upon the viol, and M de Courtomer, who vied with Mondonville as a violinist. Dehesse, an actor from the Italian Comedy, led and arranged the ballets. Bury directed the operatic portions and the choirs. Madame de Pompadour's theatrical company—

Marchais; Diana, by Madame la Duchesse de Brancas; Adonis, by the Duc d'Ayen. The Vicomte de Rohan played the part of a follower of Diana; the Marquis de Langeron that of a hunter. In *La Nuit*, or *Hero and Leander*, the Marquise de Pompadour was Hero; the Vicomte de Rohan, Leander; the Chevalier de Clermont, Neptune. In *Erigone*, a ballet given before the King on the 21st of March 1748, and repeated on the same stage on the 3rd of February 1750, a ballet mounted with extreme luxury, with choirs of singers, one on the King's side, one on the side of the Queen, Madame la Marquise de Pompadour played Erigone; the Duc d'Ayen, Bacchus; Madame Trusson, Antonoë; the Chevalier de Grammont, a follower of Bacchus; the Marquis de Courbanvaux and the Comte de Langeron played two woodlanders. In *Zélie*, represented the 13th February 1749, and repeated on the same stage, the 3rd of February 1750, Zélie was the Marquise de Pompadour; Lymphée, the Marquis de La Salle; Love, Madame de Marchais; the Marquis de Beuvron was a Pleasure, and the Comte de Melfort a woodlander. In *Égine*, Madame de Pompadour was Égine; the Marquise de La Salle, Jupiter; the Chevalier de Clermont d'Amboise, Sisyphus. The Marquis de Courbanvaux and the Comte de Melfort represented the people. In *Titon et l'Aurore*, the part of Aurore was taken by the Marquise de Pompadour; that of Hebe by Madame de Marchais; the part of Titon, by the Vicomte de Rohan; the Sun, by the Marquis de La Salle. Other diversions and ballets, between 1748 and 1750, in which the Marquise de Pompadour does not play, show us the same actors and actresses: Madame de Marchais, Madame Trusson, the Duchesse de Brancas; these are: *Les Surprises de l'Amour*, 1748; *Les Amusemens du Soir*, or *The Masque*, 13th January 1748, etc. A pantomime ballet, represented on the 12th September 1748, and repeated on the 16th January 1749, shows a village fair, all animation, and bustling with porters, ballad-sellers, flower-girls, women selling decoctions of herbs, Armenian pedlars, stalls and cheap-jacks, puppet-shows, amongst which pass and re-pass, *Chinamen*, *Three Innocent Damsels*, a *Fool*, *Germans*. It is a joyous enough harlequinade, in which the Marquis de Langeron, as a philosopher, tries to catch the *Innocents* with a line baited with a sweetmeat, and the Marquis de Courbanvaux, magnificently attired in Chinese fashion, extracts a huge tooth from the *Fool*.

a company into which the Duc de Chartres only entered with difficulty!—was as complete as it was highly born. Amongst the women, it included Madame de Sassenage, Madame de Pons, Madame de Brancas, such accomplished actresses in *Tartuffe*, and the youthful Madame de Livri, so charming as a miller's daughter. The operatic parts were sustained by Madame de Marchais, Madame de Brancas, and Madame de Trusson. The company was proud of possessing that rare comedian, the admirable Valère of *Le Méchant*, whose acting, at times, was a lesson to the Théâtre Français, the Duc de Nivernois. There were other good actors, such as the Marquis de Voyer, Croissy, Clermont d'Amboise. The Comte de Maillebois played admirably in Dufrèny's *Mariage fait et rompu*, La Vallière excelled in the parts of bailiffs, and the Duc de Duras as Blaise. The singers were Clermont d'Amboise, Courbanvaux, Luxembourg, D'Ayen, Villeroi. Dupré and Balletti had trained the Duc de Beuvron, the Comte de Melfort, the Prince of Hesse and the Comte de Langeron as dancers. And to complete the dancing, a battalion of *figurants* and *figurantes* from nine years old to twelve, a miniature opera, in which La Puvigné, La Camille and La Dorfeuille were already noticeable, supported the solo dancers. The company possessed a musical copyist, a wig-maker, no other than Notrelle, the wig-maker of the Menus-Plaisirs, so noted for his *sublime* wigs, for gods, demons, heroes, shepherds, Tritons, Cyclops, naiads and furies.¹ It had seven costumiers, who went to take the measures of Versailles, two dressers, whose names were La Jaussin and La Dangeville. It had wardrobes, dancing-shoes, silken stockings that cost fifteen livres, Roman buskins and Roman wigs, black moustaches, flame-coloured top-knots, two hundred and two costumes for men, a hundred and fifty-three costumes for women, and brocades, tissues, embroideries, braids and tassels of gold and silver to the value of two thousand one hundred and twenty

¹ *État actuel de la musique du Roi*, 1767.

livres. It possessed all necessary and conceivable properties, accessories of Tartarus or the Elysian fields, materials for a voyage to Cythera and a pilgrimage to Paphos: twelve blue and silver staffs and twelve gourds, four shepherds' crooks garnished with blue, a club imitated in cardboard, a set of mechanical serpents,—and, not least, those speaking arms of Madame de Pompadour, a wheel of Fortune and a magician's wand! It was really a theatre, in which nothing was lacking, not even regulations, laws, a charter. Madame de Pompadour had given a code to her company; and ten articles, dictated by her and approved by the King, laid it down that in order to be admitted as an associate, one had to prove that it was not the first time one had acted in comedy; that everyone must define his line of business; that one could not, without having obtained the consent of his colleagues, take a different line from that for which one had been accepted; but no associate could refuse a part suitable to him, on the excuse that it would give him scanty opportunity; that the actresses alone would enjoy the right of choosing the pieces to be performed; that they would, likewise, have the right of fixing the date of the performance, and deciding the number of rehearsals, and the day and hour when these should take place. The regulations further declared that every actor was bound to appear at the exact time fixed for the rehearsal, under penalty of a fine, which the actresses alone would settle; that to the actresses only would the half-hour's grace be accorded, after which the fine they might have incurred would be decided by themselves. Finally, the theatre of the Cabinets had its tickets. On a card, as big as a playing-card, upon which the word *Parade* was written, the witty pencil of Cochin had drawn a columbine upon a puppet-stage, her dress adorned with ribands, like the dress of Silvia in the portrait of Latour; she minces astonishment, and flirts her fan, whilst beside her, Leandre, in ruffs, his arm upon the balustrade, declares

his love to her, under the nose of Pierrot, who thrusts his head through the curtain behind: this was the gallant voucher, the "open sesame" of Madame de Pompadour's theatre.

This theatre, the performances of which succeeded one another without any interruptions save those caused by the King's hunting expeditions, became almost a government at Versailles. It was not long in attracting the whole attention of the court to it, and all the ardour of the courtiers. In putting into the King's hands a direction which amused him, it put into the hands of the favourite a fresh source of favour, and a new opportunity for domination. The list of admittances was surrounded and besieged by ambitions and solicitations as keen as those round the list of benefices; and this intimate approach to the King, which was at the disposal of the favourite, brought her an influence, hidden from the public, but real, effective, and increasing. The public, carefully chosen from the whole of Versailles, was small, select, and devoted to the mistress. The nucleus of it was formed by her family, her friends, by what might be termed her court: her brother, Vandières, her uncle, Tournehem, the Maréchal de Saxe, the two Champcenets, Madame d'Estrades, Madame du Roure. Madame de Pompadour also admitted the actors, who had their *entrée* to the entertainment, whether they played or not, and the actresses, who, when they were not playing, were accommodated in the stage-box, in which Madame de Pompadour reserved two seats, one of which was always given to her friend, the Maréchale de Mirepoix. The favourite also bestowed the honour and satisfaction of admission upon the authors whose works were represented on the stage of the Cabinets, and the composer had the right of marking the time of his music to the orchestra. Often enough she dropped an invitation upon the younger Coigny, the Marquis de Gontaud, Querchy, the Abbé de Bernis; from time to time, upon the Presidents Hénault

and Ogier, the Maréchal de Duras, Grimberghen : invitations fought for and envied, a distinction which she often let the greatest nobles at court, the greatest names in the kingdom beg for. Did she not one day give herself the pleasure of refusing the door of her theatre to a Maréchal de Noailles, to a Duc de Gesvres, to a Prince de Conti? And what other ambitions, other solicitations in the matter of the distribution of parts! It was this which left the company, and all aspirants to the company, at the mercy of Madame de Pompadour. The least *rôles*, the *utilities*, those which had the smallest share in the comedy, were disputed and obtained by means of intrigue or subtlety, as the most glorious and entrancing of favours. Thus, a certain great lord promised Madame de Pompadour's waiting-maid a command in the army, a lieutenancy to the King, for one of her relations, if she would procure him the part of police officer in *Tartuffe*, which was about to be produced in the Cabinets. "The thing was done," said Madame de Hausset, "I got my command, and M. de V—— thanked Madame, as if she had got him made a Duke."

But above all, through the theatre, Madame de Pompadour fixed and occupied the heart and eyes of the King. The theatre was the triumph both of the woman and of the actress. There she was without a rival, and shone in the first rank. In comedy she found a field for her vivacity, her subtlety, the art of diction, the spirit of breeding, the malice of a glance. In opera, she revealed all the caresses and all the enchantments of her voice. A singer and a comedienne, a grace with two faces, it seemed as though two muses had been sponsors to the cradle of this spoilt child of the eighteenth century ; the muse of song, and the muse of smiles. And how many ways of being amiable, how many manners of being lovely ! What dainty arrangements, what metamorphoses in that toilette of the stage, of a fantasy so varied and so charming ! What marvels did not the scissors of Supplis make for her—Supplis, the

famous ladies' tailor! It was sometimes the wanton, tormenting dress of comedy, the coat of a little girl or a peasant, corsets, a petticoat and skirts of white taffetas inset with blue, or, perhaps, a skirt of blue taffetas round which fluttered flimsies of gauze, or else a domino of white taffetas adorned with flowers, or, may be, Colin's rose-coloured vest. Sometimes she appeared in the Greek dress of the Prince du Noisy : her armour of puffed golden gauze was adorned with waving plumes ; upon her sleeves of English *moire* the silver made harmonies with the adornments of gold ; a network of silver with fringes set off her scarf in the centre. On another day, Madame de Pompadour borrowed her raiment from the Orient of Jerusalem delivered : she was Herminia, she was Almasis ; here she wears a dolman of cherry-coloured satin, bordered with ermine, with a petticoat of blue satin painted with gold embroidery, splashed with gold, broidered with a milleray of gold. Here she is again in Asiatic costume, the petticoat of rose taffetas set about with silver, the drapery and the mantle stamped with silver and flowers of various colours in taffetas. At other times, the opera clad her shoulders from the wardrobe of Olympus, and she appeared upon the stage in those disguises of goddesses, clouds of gauze and gossamer! She wore upon her head the beflowered straw hat of Églée, the straw hat in which one of her portraits shows her to us. She dazzled the eyes with the silver stars embroidered in spangles on the petticoat of Urania. She was the Galatea of *Astrée*, in a naiad's dress, a dress of white taffetas painted with reeds, shells and sprays of water, draped in a film of green and silver water. She was the mother of the loves, very Venus, in a costume of silver mosaic, festooned with painted taffetas, set with silver and blue, fringed with silver, and sweeping with the majesty of a royal mantle a huge train of blue stuff with a mosaic of silver. . . . Imagine the seductiveness of all these transformations, of so many costumes, which seemed to multiply the beauties

of the favourite, renovating her physiognomy and her charm in each new part; imagine the effect of all these toilettes, at that time, an enchantment, a revelation, a light! to-day, an inventory, a few scanty papers cold and dead, on which the words give us the effect of the dust upon a butterfly's wings.¹

In the midst of these pleasures, and by means of these same pleasures, Madame de Pompadour waxed greater and enlarged the radius of her power. Each day saw her drawing nearer to royalty, affecting a more assured tone of authority, and playing more seriously with the exercise of sovereignty. One day, when M. de Maurepas happened to be with the King, Madame de Pompadour asks that a *lettre de cachet* should be cancelled. "Monsieur must return," and turning to the minister, she gives him the order in the King's name; and as Maurepas objects: "His Majesty must command it. . . ." "Do what Madame wishes," says Louis XV. Furious at this omnipotence, at such a taking possession of the King's will, at this power which goes on acquiring strength, which nothing can shake, not even songs, Maurepas lost all reserve. His rashness and his indiscretion could no longer be contained; his wit, to which he gave loose rein, burst out in insults,² and his muse indulged in those brutalities which

¹ Costumes of the theatre of the private apartments. Memorandum of all the provision of wigs and accessories made for the private apartments by Notrelle, wig-maker of the Menus-Plaisirs of the King, by command of the Duc de La Vallière, in 1745 and 1748. Advances made by M. Peronnet for the ballets of the private apartments, from the month of December 1747 to the end of March 1748. General inventory of the costumes and properties of the theatre of the private apartments, in the custody of Madame Schneider, made in the year 1749. (Manuscript collection preserved in the Bibliothèque of the Arsenal, 47. B.L.F.)—*Spectacles of the "little Cabinets" of Louis XV.*, by Laujon; continuation of the *Mémoirs of Madame du Haussset*.—*Mémoires du Maréchal Duc de Richelieu*. Vol. viii.—*Mémoires Historiques pendant la faveur de Madame de Pompadour*.

² Shortly after his disgrace, Maurepas thus defended himself to his friends for part of the malicious attacks against the favourite attributed to him: "As to the interior here, persistence, as usual, of the attacks, persistence of the songs, in which M. de Richelieu and M. d'Ayen have undoubtedly a share, persistence of the ill-temper of the Marquise, at present ill from loss of blood reported to be a miscarriage; I know not what it is; obstinate persistence to put down to me some of the remarks which I have not made; finally, on

strike a woman in her weakness and outrage her in her sex. After a supper-party in the cabinets, between the King, the Comtesse d'Estrades, Madame de Pompadour and Maurepas, the minister uttered the cruel and famous allusion to the bouquet of white hyacinths which Madame de Pompadour had pulled to pieces during supper and scattered beneath her shoes. Madame de Pompadour, demanding vengeance and failing to obtain it, finished by seeking the minister, and asked him "what if he knew the author of the songs?"—"When I know him," replied Maurepas, "I will tell the King." "Monsieur," retorted the Marquise, "you make mighty small account of the King's mistresses." To which, Maurepas, without troubling himself: "I have always respected them, *whatever sort they were*," and he accentuated the insolence of the phrase with a look.

At the conclusion of the interview at the Maréchal de Villars', being complimented on the flattering visit he had received that morning: "Yes," he replied, "that of the Marquise. It will bring her misfortune. I remember that Madame de Mailly also came to see me, two days before she was dismissed by Madame de Châteauroux. I bring misfortune to them all." Madame de Pompadour hastened to carry off the King, and during an expedition to the little Château of La Celle, keeping the King all to herself, out of reach of exterior influences, away from the minister, who had gone to Mademoiselle de Maupeon's wedding, she spoke to the lover of the insults put upon his mistress, to the King of the disrespect of his chief servants. To the suspicious father, the Louis XV. so prone to suspicion, she depicted M. de Maurepas as responsible for the insurrection of the royal family against its head, as the instigator of the songs and innuendoes circulating everywhere against her and against the King

my part, philosophic persistence in silence and indifference towards this matter and its consequences."—*Letter of the Comte de Maurepas, 1st April 1749.* *Oeuvres posthumes du Duc de Nivernois.* Vol. i.

himself. She laid perfidious stress on the intimacy of the Dauphin with M. de Maurepas. All, however, would have failed, perhaps, but for a stroke of cunning which flashed through Madame de Pompadour's head like an inspiration: she set to work to weary the King with pretended fears of having been poisoned by Maurepas. She incessantly repeated to him that she would perish by the hand which had caused the so opportune disappearance of Madame de Châteauroux. She carried the comedy and her feigned terror so far as to wish to have a surgeon sleeping near her apartment, and antidotes within her reach. And she filled the King's soul with such dreads, that she snatched from him a desire, and, as it were, a *coup d'état* of fear: Maurepas was exiled.¹ But, on leaving for Bourges, with that smile which is the mask of his whole life, Maurepas bequeathed to Madame de Pompadour the enmity of his colleague d'Argenson. The latter was a foe of another sort; he had darker passions, a colder soul, graver hates.

At last, the Marquise de Pompadour reigned, and her tone was adapted to the superb insolence of her fortune. She endeavoured to drop upon all the projects and petitions a royal: "We will see." She said already to the ministers: "Proceed, I am pleased with you; you know that I have long been your friend." To the ambassadors she said again: "For several Tuesdays the King will be unable to see you, gentlemen, for I suppose you would not come to look for us at Compiègne."² And she accustomed her mouth and the court to that *We*, which put the royal utterance on her lips, and was, as it were, the half of royalty. Her apartment at Versailles, on the ground floor, was the royal apartment of the Montespan. The utmost etiquette prevailed there, the traditions of which the Marquise had sought for in the manuscripts of the memorialists of the court of Louis XIV.: a single arm-chair

¹ *Mémoires du Marquis d'Argenson.* Janet, 1857, vol. iii.

² *Ibid.* Vol. iv.

forewarned all to remain standing before the enthroned favourite ; and there was found in that humbled Versailles, but one man to seat himself on the arm of that chair, that frank and brave courtier, with so much heart and so much wit, daring and saying everything, the Marquise de Souvré, the last King's jester of the monarchy. Madame de Pompadour's carriage had the velvet cap and ducal mantle on the arms. It was a gentleman, a gentleman belonging to one of the oldest families of Guyenne, snatched from penury, who bore Madame de Pompadour's cloak upon his arm, followed at the door of her sedan-chair, and waited for her to come out in the antechamber. Her butler, Collin, she had not thought worthy to hold the napkin behind her who wore the cross of Saint Louis upon her breast.¹ And as though her pride passed the

¹ Here is the state of Madame de Pompadour's household at Versailles, according to the summary of expenses published by M. Leroy :

	Livres
Nesme, first intendant	8,000
Collin, in charge of the servants, attached to her as secretary	6,000
Quesnay, physician, lodged and boarded	3,000
Sauvant	2,000
Gourbillon	1,800
Aunay	200
Tréon	150
Neveu	100
La Duhasset, chamber-maid	150
La Courtaget	150
La Neveu (doubtless, the second chamber-maid, a woman of quality who had concealed her real name with such success that Madame du Hausset did not know it)	150
Jeanneton, still-room woman	400
La Duguesnay, wardrobe maid	100
Lignès, butler	600
Benoit, chief cook	400
Charles, assistant cook	400
Two scullions	400
Pastry-cook	400
Roaster	400
Waiter	200
Two scullions	400
Head of the pantry	400
A second head of the pantry	400
Assistant to above	200
Waiter	150

bounds of her life and must accompany her in death, she bought a vault from the Crégny family, at the Capucines of the Place Vendôme, where she had the body of her mother conveyed and prepared a magnificent mausoleum for herself. In this majesty of scandal, in this huge enjoyment of favour, in the midst of this prosperity and these delights, loaded with riches, bounded by that horizon of splendours which starts, around her and within her scope, with the suite of furniture which is the envy and admiration of Europe, Madame de Pompadour dreams of raising her family to her own level. She desires her kinsmen to follow her and gravitate in the orb of her greatness. She wishes the obscurity of her birth to be obliterated beneath the titles and offices of those to whom she belongs, and her blood to be so exalted in that court that she need no longer remember she ever blushed for it. She hides her father in the lordship of Marigny, which she buys from the confraternity of Saint-Côme. For her brother she obtains the captaincy of Grenelle, with the revenue of a hundred thousand livres attached to it, and covers his name with the Marquisate of Vandières. But what different projects, ambitions how far more impudent occupy the maternal vanity of Madame de Pompadour! What dreams for the future hover over the head of that fair young girl, her daughter and her portrait: Alexandrine d'Étoiles, who is growing up in the Convent of the Assumption, where she

	Livres
Drawer	400
Assistant-Drawer	150
Outrider	800
A Suisse	600
Four lackeys	1,800
Torch-bearers	300
Two negroes	1,800
A porter	400
A door-keeper	400
Two head-porters	1,118
Two watermen	768
Three coachmen	2,574
Three postilions	1,566
Four grooms	1,766
Three embroidresses	1,500

attracts the greatest heiresses in the kingdom, eager to form a friendship which may, later on, become a protection.¹ Madame de Pompadour's daughter is brought up like a princess; like princesses, she only calls herself by her Christian name; and her mother has nurtured her vanity so well that she disputes precedence with Mademoiselle de Soubise.² The Marquise, dreaming of a duchy of Maine for her, had sent one day, in her fig-garden at Bellevue, for a handsome child, who in his face, gestures, attitudes was the living portrait of the King his father: this child was the Comte de Luc, the son of Louis XV. and Madame de Vintimille. Madame de Pompadour sought to interest the King in the union of these two beautiful children, and endeavoured to turn the King's softened mind towards that pretty castle in the air, a family in which the likeness of grandfather and grandmother should be reunited, a race to smile on their old age and speak to every eye, a race which should mingle the blood of Louis and the Pompadour.³ But the King remained cold to this project; and Madame de Pompadour fell back upon an alliance with the Duc de Fronsac, the son of the Maréchal de Richelieu. Good courtier as Richelieu was, however submissive his pride to his ambition, he was almost wounded at the honour the Marquise would do him, and answered her ironically, "that he was most flattered by her choice, but that his son, on his mother's side, had the honour of belonging to the princes of the House of Lorraine, and that he was compelled to ask their consent." These two checks did not discourage Madame de Pompadour, and caused her to abate no whit of her pretensions. She returned to another side of the court, and was almost satisfied at having negotiated the marriage of Alexandrine with the Duc de Chaulnes, who

¹ *Mémoires du Marquis d'Argenson.* Vol. iii.

² *Mémoires Historiques pendant la faveur de Madame de Pompadour.* Bertrand, 1802.

³ *Mémoires de Madame du Haussset.* Baudouin.

was to bring three millions into the family he entered,¹ when a chill, caught at Benediction in the Convent of the Assumption, degenerating into virulent small-pox, robbed her of this child of her hopes, and left only a brother and a father for the ambition of her affections.

But what could or would Madame de Pompadour do for her father, beyond hiding him and keeping him in the second plan of favour, in one of those satisfied obscurities, one of those positions of gratified and unassuming ease in which courtesans bury out of modesty a father without prejudices?

The paternal Poisson appears, from the few coarse traits which history has retained of him, as the type of a subordinate tax-farmer, vulgarising in his gross and robust person, the wit, the scepticism, the tastes, the vices, even the very insolence of the great financiers of the day. It is a gross man, full of wine, of blood and wine, fired and disordered by debauchery, drunken and dubious, who steeps the scandal he causes in his cynicism, and in that head of his, which has interviewed the gallows, nurses the theories and morals of a *Neveu de Rameau*. Joyous, mocking and brutal, set squarely, hat on head, in the impunity of his fortune and the disgrace of his pensions, he laughs at everything with a shameless irony and a crude speech; he reminds his daughter's lackeys of his title of father in language that can not be quoted; he escapes from the contempt of others by flaunting the contempt he has for himself; he enforces his commands on the Pompadour, wrests favours from her, through the intimidation his sight causes, and his threats of a disturbance; and it is he who, one night in the middle of a supper-party, bursting into a peal of laughter which checks the orgy, shouts at his fellow-guests, shouts at Montmartel, in tones as crushing as a blow from a fist: "You, Monsieur de Montmartel, are the son of an inn-keeper. . . . You, Monsieur de Savalette, the son of

¹ *Journal Anecdotique de Barbier.* Vol. iii.

a vinegar-maker. . . . You, Bourret,¹ 'the son of a lackey. . . . What I am? . . . Who is there does not know?'²

A very different man, a perfectly presentable relation, was Madame de Pompadour's brother. He derived nothing from his father, neither in character nor in face. Before he grew fat, he was his sister's equal in beauty, in that smiling, and, as it were, princely beauty, which we see in Tocqué's portrait. He was elegant, graceful, finely built, of noble manners; in brief, graced with all the externals which put a man in his place in the elegant court of Louis XV. The King liked him; admitted him to his *tête-à-tête* suppers with Madame de Pompadour, called him by the name of "little brother."² He was successful, he pleased; he was neither exacting nor commanding; finally, he was entirely devoted to his sister. Nevertheless, in this brother so well endowed, so happily adapted to the position of the favourite, forming such a contrast to the unworthy and compromising father, there existed an unfortunate quality which chilled Madame de Pompadour's goodwill by thwarting the dreams of her vanity and the ambitions of her affection. Madame de Pompadour's brother, brought up and trained by the paternal Poisson to be excessively distrustful of himself, was modest to the point of shyness; he had that bashfulness which deprives ambition of assurance as it deprives the countenance of ease; and he himself recalled with a charming *naïveté*, his embarrassment when, being quite young, he could not drop his handkerchief in the gallery of Versailles without seeing in a moment the skilled cooks grovelling and disputing for the honour of picking it up. These were weaknesses too ridiculous in such a land, at court, not to be railed at and calumniated. The shyness of Madame de Pompadour's brother was voted nullity by

¹ *Vie Privée de Louis XV.* Londres, Peter Lyton. Vol. iii.—*Histoire de la Marquise de Pompadour, 1759.*

² *Vie Privée de Louis XV.* Vol. ii.

all the courtiers ; and there were not jests enough at Versailles against the Marquis "*Day-before-Yesterday*," flouted in the song :

Qu' ébloui par un vain éclat,
 Poisson tranche du petit maître ;
 Qu'il pense qu' à la cour un fat
 Soit difficile à reconnoître :
 Ah ! le voilá, ah ! le Voicy
 Celui qui n'en a nul souci.¹

These laughs, which cut the Marquise to the quick, excited her self-conceit against the brother who did not take his marquise as seriously as she could have wished, and seemed to encourage the laughers by his philosophy and absent-minded ways. She endeavoured to shake him up, to inspire him ; she tormented and urged him to seek places, honours, aggrandisement, but was unsuccessful in rousing him from that sort of sluggishness of soul, and moderation of desires which made him ten times during his life refuse to become minister. She sent him on a visit to Italy² with a host of historians, painters, draughts-

¹ Manuscript collection of Maurepas. Bibliothèque Nationale. Vol. xxxv. See Appendix.

² Two letters show us the tone of Madame de Pompadour's correspondence with her brother during his tour in Italy.

"This 16th of March.

"Received at Rome, March the 31st.

"If the letter which I addressed to the French post-master at Turin does not reach you, my dear brother, it is but a slight loss. The Infanta has so many reasons to love the King, that I am not astonished at the eagerness she has shown you to get his news. It is difficult to find a father so unique in every point. The Dame de Lede is of a haughty enough disposition ; nevertheless she is under obligations to me, and is too politic, besides, not to be well disposed toward you. But she is sheltered in the country from which you come. Thus I am not surprised at the ill they tell you of her, principally from Maulevrier, who detests her. The drawing you have sent me of the altar of St Fidel seems to me as ridiculous as it does to you. The Princesse Trivulce knew almost all the gentlemen of the court during the war in Italy, I am not surprised, therefore, that she should have talked to you of them ; you did well to answer with prudence.

"For the last week I have had a very serious swelling in the head ; it is much better now, and I am at the Hermitage. You will hear from Paris, however, that I have been spitting up blood ; that also is true as often as they say it. Madame la Dauphine has passed four months, in consequence three-and-a-half

men, governors. On the death of Lenormand de Tournehem, she pushed him into the position of general director of buildings, gardens, arts, manufactures ; that direction of art in which the brother of the Marquise becomes, according to the expression of a contemporary, *arbiter elegantiarum*, and creates a new knowledge and a new taste in art by the internal arrangement of apartments, their architecture and decoration. And none the less, the sure tact, the rare style, all the zeal that he brings to this ministry of the ideal, and of the industry of France, the most able management, the most generous and sympathetic government of the things and world of art do not disarm the preconceived judgments of the court, and the injustice of opinion towards the man of whom Quesnay, a judge by no means to be accused of partiality, said : "He is a man very little known ; no one speaks of his wit and his knowledge, nor of all he has done for the advancement of the arts ; nobody, since Colbert, has done as much in his place ; he is, moreover, a perfectly honest man, but people will only see in him the brother of the

gone with child ; you can judge of my joy. Good-night, dear gossip ; I embrace you with all my heart. I hope in another fortnight to be able to send you the portraits. Write to me for your clothes."—Autograph Letter of Madame de Pompadour. Collection of the late Comte de Panisse.

"Received at Turin, June 6th, 1750.

"My picture must have surely reached you, my dear brother ; you can only be impatient then for that of the King. I do not know whether you have given the Sieur Verney the order for the two I require from him. Madame du Haussey's kinsman may, by chance, be a man of repute ; but there are mighty few such in that condition. Pray send me your route, dear gossip. M. de Saint-Germain told me that Lefort would reach Turin on the 2nd or 3rd of June ; you ought then to be setting off. I hope that you will continue to do as well as on your first visit to that court. Give my compliments to my Lord Lismore. I was to have gone to Crécy to-morrow, but have put off my journey, as there are throat troubles in the district, like those prevalent a year ago in Paris. I am too much attached to the King to risk even the slightest anxiety about his person. I was desirous of going there to pass twenty-four hours. His Majesty would not permit me. Good-night, dear brother ; Vanloo's portrait is not finished ; he has had the measles at his house. M. de T. dared not see him in order to give his opinion."—Autograph Letter of Madame de Pompadour, communicated by M. Boutron.

favourite, and because he is stout, deem him heavy and dull of wit.”¹

But if Madame de Pompadour was humiliated to see her brother thus misconstrued, she was wounded and in despair at seeing him unmarried, an obstinate bachelor. A great and magnificent marriage for her brother, which would prevent her from dying altogether, and by carrying on her fortune in a family of her blood, hand down to nephews the inheritance of her opulence and her pride, was the hope to which the Marquise clung after the death of her daughter Alexandrine. And the grief she felt at being disappointed in this last dream, the sorrow caused her by the refusals and resistance of her brother, are clearly depicted in the following confidential letter to her father, curious, from the vivacity with which the Marquise defends herself against the charge of being insatiable for her family : “ I know, my dear father, of many red ribands promised, and much doubt, therefore, whether it be possible to obtain one for M. de Petit ; there has never been any question of the provost-ship of Paris for my brother, neither he nor I have funds to dispose of. This office is very dear, brings in little, and would not make him a greater noble than he is, but it is very certain that everything that is vacant will be attributed to him by the public, it has become accustomed to people who are insatiable ; I should be sorely displeased to have this infamous character, or that my brother should have it. I am very vexed that he will not marry, he will never find a match like the one I hoped to arrange for him. I am delighted that you amuse yourself at Crécy ; stay there, my dear father, as long as the place suits you, and believe in my tender attachment.”²

The years glided away, without reconciling the Marquis de Vandières, now the Marquis de Marigny, to the projects

¹ *Mémoires de Madame du Hausset.* Baudouin.

² Autograph Letter of Madame de Pompadour, communicated by M. Fossé d'Arcosse.

of the Marquise. And satisfied with the present, glutted with honours and riches, detached from the court which he did not like, glad to live at his ease, gently rocked by the facile graces of life, in that world of artists which he had made his world, he would not consent to stake his happiness, his friendships, his indolence and his pleasant freedom against the noblest alliance; and he drove the Marquise to despair with the final impenitence of his epicurean wisdom.

In the midst of all these benefits lavished upon her family, all the fortunes she built up around her, the favourite was urging on her private fortune and raising it to a royal opulence. She amassed possessions and castles, and attained such a vast ownership of estates and houses as no other mistress had ever ventured to dream of. In 1746, she bought from the farmer-general, Rousset, the estate of La Celle, which cost her 155,000 livres, and for which she abandoned Montretout. The same year she bought the estate of Crécy. In 1747, she paid 100,000 crowns for a hôtel at Fontainebleau.¹ She united the estate of Crécy with the estate of Aulnay, for which she paid 400,000 livres; in 1750, she acquired Brimborion, below Bellevue. In 1752, she bought the estate of Saint-Rémy, adjoining the estate of Crécy, and a hotel, for 100,000 crowns, at Compiègne. On April 1st of 1753, she bought the magnificent Hôtel of the Comte d'Évreux, on the Champs-Élysées, at a price of 800,000 livres.² And to all these purchases must be added the Hermitage of Fontainebleau, the Hermitage of Versailles, the Château of Meudon, and, finally, Bellevue.

¹ "The garden of Madame la Marquise de Pompadour at Fontainebleau, designed by L'Assurance, is noble and perfectly beautiful, being 67 T. long by 60 broad. Noticeable is the fine grass lawn, adorned with the rarest flowers, in front, and the little woods to the right and left of the pavilion, intersected by sixteen cabinets of different styles, around a green hall, which is 25 T. long by 14 broad. A small menagerie to the left of the pavilion renders this site even more agreeable."—*Jardins Anglais et Chinois*, par Leronge. 1788.

² The purchase of the Hôtel d'Évreux brought down on Madame de Pompadour a storm of epigrams, songs, insulting inscriptions. A notice inscribed

But the sale-money was not the heaviest item in the expense of these acquisitions. No sooner was the land acquired, than money poured in upon it. A whole colony of painters, workers in marble, sculptors, gilders, metal-workers, potters, joiners, florists, and gardeners, swooped down upon each new domain of Madame de Pompadour, and remoulding it, as her tastes, her caprices, her follies ordered, cast into the estate of La Celle, 68,114 livres ; into Crécy and D'Aulnay, 3,947,264 livres ; into the Hôtel at Compiègne, 30,242 ; Pompadour, 28,000 ; into the Hermitage of Fontainebleau, 216,382 ; into the Hermitage of Versailles, 283,013 ; into the Hôtel d'Évreux, 95,169 ; and into Bellevue 2,526,927 livres.¹ From this vast prodigality, which raised the cost of Madame de Pompadour to France to more than thirty-six millions, from all this money lavished without reckoning on these dwelling-places of a luxury, an elegance, and an artistic taste hitherto unknown, there rose those pleasure-palaces of the favourite, of which Bellevue was the admirable example.

That small and delicious model of a royal château, that museum of French art created by Madame de Pompadour, and filled with her inspiration, Bellevue, sprang from the earth as if by magic. Struck by the extent and beauty of the view, when accidentally passing those hills which seem a natural terrace, the foot of which is bathed by the Seine, Madame de Pompadour made an appointment with two architects, L'Assurance and D'Isle, and there, on the territory of her dream, seated on a rustic operatic throne improvised out of grass and stones, she drew out her plan, marked the site of the buildings, and traced the arrange-

Aedes Regiae meretricum was affixed to the walls of the Hôtel ; and later, Madame de Pompadour, having taken some land on the Champs-Élysées to make a kitchen-garden, was compelled by the public murmurs to abandon her project.

¹ Summary of the Expenditure of Madame de Pompadour from the first year of her favour until her death, by J. A. Leroy.—*Mémoires Historiques et Anecdotiques de la Cour de France pendant la faveur de la Marquise de Pompadour.* Bertrand, 1802.

ment of the gardens.¹ The first blow of the pick was struck on the 30th June 1748, and the works were carried on so energetically that the inauguration was able to take place on the 2nd December 1750, in presence of the King, with a charming ballet, *Love the Architect*, in which one saw a mountain, the *Mountain in Labour* of La Fontaine, delivered of the Château of Bellevue, while on the Bellevue road, one of those carriages known as *pots de chambre* was upset, and tumbled upon the stage a basket full of women, a ballet and dancers.² The principal wing of the château had only nine windows, according to the expressed desire of the King.³ It displayed on the exterior, marble busts attached in the interspaces. The antechamber was adorned with two statues upon which the chisels of Falconnet and of Adam had vied with one another. In the dining-room Oudry had painted the accessories of hunting and fishing, and these were repeated on the wood-work by the fine carvings of Verbreck. Six paintings by Vanloo, *Comedy* and *Tragedy*, lined the walls of the reception-room. A gallery, in which Love smiled in the marble of Saly, led to the music-room, of which the door-panels were signed by Pierre. Next came the King's apartment, painted by Vanloo, and separated from the apartment of Madame de Pompadour by a boudoir in chintz, decorated in gold, enlivened by two Chinese landscapes from the brush and invention of Boucher. The elder Brunetti had painted the staircase, and his decorative genius had wrought, in the mass of a noble architecture extending to the first floor, the ladder of Olympus, Bacchus and Ariadne, Zephyrus and Flora, Diana and Endymion. Boulogne and Vernet had brought their names and efforts to the paintings in the apartment of the Dauphin and Dauphine; for the château of Madame de Pompadour contained an apart-

¹ *Dictionnaire Historique de la Ville de Paris et de ses Environs*, par Hurtaut. Moutard, 1779.

² *Mémoires et Journal inédit du Marquis d'Argenson*. Vol. iv.

³ *Journal Historique et Anecdotique du Règne de Louis XV.*, par Barbier. Vol. iii.

ment for the Dauphin and Dauphine. Next came the great curiosity and glory of Bellevue, the gallery conceived and designed by Madame de Pompadour in person, a gallery, throughout the whole length of which garlands of an amazing delicacy, carved by Verbreck and daintily painted by Dinaut and Du Fort, formed a frame to some of the prettiest of Boucher's pictures, to which the texture of the furniture seemed a harmonious echo. The brush of Perrot had caught up there, with an exquisite art, the gaieties of colour, the frolic light, the rural and bedizened allegories cast upon the walls by the painter.¹ In that Bellevue everything was in harmony; and in those painted saloons, gilded and splendid, or through those gardens, grottoes, those alleys which sloped down so pleasantly, beside those living and, as it were, truant waters, in the arbour by the waterfall, the green arbours, the arbours where the trees formed canopies, which were known as the *Rond de Sèvres*, the avenues of sycamores from Lebanon, and poplars from Lombardy, beside the two nymphs of Pigalle, the pedestrian statue of Louis XV. in Genoa marble, or the marble Apollo of Coustou,² there came and went, passed and strolled, a whole world dressed in the livery of the Château, and after the fantasy of the place: the men wore coats of purple cloth, embroidered with golden borders, with vests of grey satin worked with a design traced in purple, and fringed with four inches of dead gold embroidery; the women were clad in dresses similar to the vests of the men.³ And what uniform were better fitted for that palace of enchantment where, presently, in full winter, the Marquise is to astonish the King with that unheard-of and prodigious flower-bed, all the flowers of spring, all the sweet-smelling flowers of summer,

¹ *Dictionnaire Historique de la Ville de Paris*, par Hurtaut.

² *Jardins Anglo-chinois*, par Lerouge. 1788.

³ *Journal Historique de Barbier*. Vol. iii. The Marquise, for the uniform of these visits to Choisy, presented the women with material for their gowns, the men with the material for their coats and vests, and the design for the embroidery, which, for coat and vest, amounted to nearly 11,000 livres.

living almost—a flower-bed in perfumed porcelain of Sèvres.¹

This imagination of Madame de Pompadour, a real imagination of Armides, did not confine itself to the fair domain she had created ; she remoulded and added fresh decorations to the châteaux where the King received her, and repaid him with the hospitality of Bellevue.

Choisy, which belonged to the King, became, as it were, her property, owing to all the embellishments she brought to it, all the expenses incurred at her command. From small matters to great, all the luxury of the Château, all that was beautiful in the life of Choisy belonged to her, and exhibited in its least details the delicacy of her inventiveness ; was it not she who devised that castle of faery, in which the mechanical table invented by her in collaboration with the engineer, the model of which was sold at the Marquis de Menars' sale, the table of Loriot supplied the King² with a pin for which he had asked, with verses by Lanjou ?

¹ *Mémoires du Marquis d'Argenson.* Vol. iv.

² *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, par M. Charles Blanc.—*Madame de Pompadour*, par A. de la Fizelière, 1st September 1859. Of this life, this sojourn at Choisy, there remains little else, scattered in different directions, than the “Visits of the King to the Château of Choisy, with the lodgings provided for the Court and the Menus of his Majesty's Table,” manuscripts of small importance, of which the Bibliothèque of Rouen possesses one year, while another year, the year 1757, is in our hands. The suppers consist of a first course composed of two *ogliers* and two soups, eight side-dishes, four large *entrées*, four *rèleaves*, eight roasts, four salads, from twelve to sixteen sweets, hot or cold ; amongst the soups, to be noticed : *potage à la Pontchatrain*, *à la Villeroy*, *à la bonne femme*, *chiffonnade*, cabbage, and onion soup, with toasted cheese and barley-bread, a soup known as “*gendarme*,” with Spanish onions ; amongst the *rèleaves*, the most striking names and designations are these : turtle doves *à l'imromptu*, ringdoves *à la polonoise*, gamestew *à l'Espagnole*, quails *à la Xaintouge*, sheep-tongues *à la Saint-Herém*, chicklings *à la Saint-Cloud*, pasty of legs of goose with Monsalvic peas, potted birds with sauce, young turkeys with leek sauce, spring-chickens *à la Gontault*, pheasants *à la Mancille*, pasties *à la Balanquine*, teal *à la Matignon*, fowls *à la Mezeray*, chickens *à Luriubie*, pasties *à la Nesle*, lambs' tails *au Soleil*, pigeons cooked with eggs *à la Mouglas*, water-fowls' breasts *à la Rocambole* ; and finally, at the supper of the 13th December 1757, a turkey from the menagerie with the “skin of a sucking pig.” There is nothing remarkable about the roasts except their origin, the rabbits of M. de Cromard, de la Vallière, the young turkey-cocks of Madame la Marquise, etc. The marvellous imagination of the cook, who was able every fast-day to devise the necessary forty-eight dishes, is displayed in the side-dishes, where we find

Where Madame de Pompadour endeavoured and succeeded was in bringing change and contrast to all these retreats which afforded the King's *ennui* the distraction of a lucky-box. When he was weary of Bellevue and Choisy, she received him at the pretty Hermitage of Versailles, where all was countrified, where the house looked on nothing but sheep-folds, where the gardens, free of the pomp and monotony of French gardens, were all myrtle-bowers, shrubberies of roses, rustic hiding-places for Love's statue, fields of daffodils, pinks, violets, tuberoses, embalming the air with nature's own perfumes.¹ It was there that, renewing her beauty, she revived the King's fancy by the changes and disguises of her person, now appearing to him in the dress of the Sultana of Vanloo, now dawning upon him as a fair gardener, in the costume which has been handed down to us, said by her to be her best likeness—her head covered by a straw hat lined with blue, with that blue, her favourite colour, which was the cause of all blue garments being christened “the Marquise's clothes”; her left arm passed through the handle of a basket of flowers, her right hand holding a spray of hyacinths. Or again, she would charm the King's eyes with a dress, the conception and pattern of which she had found in a gallant assembly of Watteau, an ideal undress, since dubbed a *négligé à la Pompadour*: imagine a sort of Turkish vest, tight round the neck, buttoned at the wrist, plastic to the bust, clinging round the hips, revealing all that it left visible and suggesting all that it hid.

“fennel crests,” cakes *au lard*, “booted” claws, spinach *à l'essence*; blanc-mange fritters *au blanc de poularde*, eggs broiled in partridge jelly, stews of carps' tongues, roast anchovies, *moutantes à la Romaine*, jellies, cream *à la Saint-Genest*, etc. In all this, there is nothing which recalls the favourite, nor the fillets *à la Bellevue*, mentioned by Lamesangère in his manuscript *Dictionnaire du luxe*, nor the rissoles *à la Pompadour* of which Mercier speaks.

¹ *Histoire de Madame la Marquise de Pompadour*. Londres, à la Tête de César, 1759.

None the less, in spite of all these seductions and this perpetual bewitching of the King's senses and his love, the favourite was obliged each day to dispute and regain her power. Its exercise, its maintenance, and its augmentation was a laborious and incessant conquest. The effort of a perpetual battle, the tension of a sleepless activity, the constant labour of the head, a daily combination of intrigues, subterfuges and countermoves was necessary to keep Madame de Pompadour enthroned in her slippery greatness, and in that high estate so envied and attacked, so beset with traps and snares, assaulted by ambition and treason; a cloud of favour at the mercy of a breath, a caprice, a storm, or a pin-stab. To possess the King, occupy his *ennui*, startle and amuse him by change of scene and the element of surprise in his pleasures; when ill, and restricted to a milk diet, to go abroad and sup, to remain beautiful and find factitious strength to keep beauty and freshness amid fatigue, this was the favourite's easiest task. What was that beside the most exhausting part of her *rôle*, the hardest expiation of her rule: to be every moment on the watch, to divine the menace of a smile, and the danger lurking in success, to surmount the indolence and indisposition of body and mind, to oppose a resistance to all who surrounded the King, to all who approached him, to hidden enemies, secret plots, to the Royal family, the ministry, the rivals which start up, the perils which are unmasked! Maurepas being dismissed, Madame de Pompadour had found a more dangerous and serious adversary in the ministry, an enemy with more mastery over himself, incapable of compromising his hates by petty malice, or the success of his plans by the trivial victory of an epigram. This enemy, the Comte d'Argenson, was supported by the King, who believed him profoundly attached to his person, and attributed to him one of those devotions which stifle personal interest and dominate private interests. He was further agreeable to the King owing to the habit of several

years of labour, during which, sparing Louis XV. the details of affairs, he conducted his understanding and his decision gently and without wearying him to the capital point. A man of ability, a disciple of Fleury in his treatment of the King, flattering the master by his thoughtfulness and softness of speech; ill or well, never leaving the King, and still holding him, when the gout separated him from his person, with a succession of little notes; knowing in difficult moments, during the storms excited by the mistress, how to arouse in the King the grateful, affectionate, and almost filial sentiments of a political pupil; a consummate courtier, furthering his pretensions and resentments by hidden roads, moderating them by those two courtly virtues, dissimulation and patience; the Comte d'Argenson, in the strength bestowed by such a position and character, obstinately and stealthily attacked in Madame de Pompadour the great obstacle which prevented him from becoming prime-minister, and building upon the foundation of the King's weakness a domination which would have continued the tutelage of the old Cardinal. After Maurepas' disgrace, Madame de Pompadour had as friends in the ministry, or near it, Puysieux, Saint-Severin, Boulogne, the brothers Paris, the Cardinal de Tencin, the Maréchal de Noailles. All powerful as she was, she dared nothing venture, in her fear of D'Argenson, who wished, as Madame de Pompadour well knew, if not to overthrow her, at least to confine her absolutely to the management of the King's pleasures. Madame de Pompadour, who, after having obtained Orry's dismissal, had seen the Controller-general appointed on D'Argenson's nomination; who had seen, but little previously, D'Argenson carry off for Duparc the superintendence of posts which she was soliciting for her cousin Ferrand; Madame de Pompadour, wounded at this credit which thwarted her desires and wishes, bore no less animosity towards the minister than he felt for her. She had for the Comte d'Argenson, in the expression of the Marquis, her brother,

"a profound and venomous hatred, which soon accumulated interest"; and after a feint of reconciliation, to which both minister and mistress brought only words, the mistress resolved to rob the minister of the support of his colleague, Machault, who, although attached to and owing everything to D'Argenson, was hesitating and undecided as to the side he meant to take in the ministry.

Machault was easily seduced by Madame de Pompadour. Machault won over, the favourite pushed him forward, sounded his praises, advanced him greatly in the King's opinion. At the same time, she cleverly contrived to bring to his ears the unfortunate indiscretions of the Queen, which betrayed the confidences and attacks of D'Argenson against the favourite in the intimacy of the Royal circle; so much so that on the day when Machault took his place at the Council as Keeper of the Seals, the King said to his favourite minister with a certain harshness: "Monsieur, the moment has come to retreat a little." In the eyes of the lookers-on at court it was almost a disgrace; and their anticipations were confirmed when, a few days later they saw Machault instructing the Dauphin, on the eve of the Prince's installation in the Council, in the principles of the Council of Dispatches,—an instruction which, according to the precedents, should have devolved upon the Comte d'Argenson, the senior Secretary of State. The signs of waning favour were multiplied. D'Argenson seemed to despair of his position. He said openly: "that it only hung upon a thread, that he was as solitary as the ace of spades." But although ill and gouty, broken down and crushed as he was, in spite of the growing power of Machault, who called Saint-Florentin and Rouillié to the ministry and deprived D'Argenson's own nephew of the office of Minister of Foreign Affairs, which was given to Saint-Contest, the threatened and enfeebled minister persisted in his hostility to Madame de Pompadour. He carried on the war with

the same spirit and energy, and collected arms and allies from every side.¹

Madame de Pompadour had with her at that time a cousin, very ugly, ill-humoured and avaricious, if the chronicles are to be believed, but to whom we may not deny both wit and intelligence. This companion, this friend ready for anything, had gradually acquired a great ascendancy over the favourite, and exercised a sort of domination over her will which she swayed by flattery. Behind this relation and apparent intimacy this kinswoman and this friend, Madame la Comtesse d'Estrades, nursed one of those profound and passionate jealousies for the position and fortune of Madame de Pompadour, which are special to those violent friendships between women whose situations are unequal; and Versailles whispered of an attempt, audacious enough, made by Madame d'Estrades upon the King one night when he was drunk at Choisy. D'Argenson, one of whose great means of power was a perfectly organised system of espionage, got wind of Madame d'Estrades' secret inclinations. That minister, who all his life was to make war against Madame de Pompadour behind a woman, whose hand Madame de Pompadour had seemed to detect in the hand of his mistress, Madame Sauvé, when she threw insulting leaflets into the cradle of the Duc de Bourgogne, to whom she was first woman of the bedchamber,—D'Argenson immediately conceived the idea of making a screen of Madame d'Estrades. He sounded her, and saw at once the advantage to be derived from her ambitions and envies, the gall she had assimilated from her position, the revengeful appetite of her vanity, which had been roughly treated by words of the favourite. He appealed to all those secret passions of protected and humiliated friendship, and flattering them with his fine tact, and his persuasive drawing-room eloquence, succeeded in completely seducing her and “acquiring this Comtesse

¹ *Mémoires du Marquis d'Argenson.* Vol. iv.

*d'Estrades.*¹ This alliance, studiously concealed, at first, from Madame de Pompadour and deceiving her, gave D'Argenson the opportunity of keeping an eye and ear upon the private apartments. It put him in the secret of the thoughts, projects, intentions, confidences of the favourite. It enlightened him as to all Madame de Pompadour believed she had to fear from the fatigue of the King's love. It emboldened him, finally, to employ against Madame de Pompadour the last despairing device of all the ministers of the time: the introduction to the King's desires of another mistress, a rival candidate.

The favour of the youthful Madame de Choiseul-Romanet, the pleasure which the King derived from amusing himself with her saucy and childish ways, decided D'Argenson and Madame d'Estrades to embark on the adventure, to endeavour to render the royal caprice serious. Madame d'Estrades staked the experience and invention of her wits, and set to work with passion at the task of compromising the King and bringing his love to a head.

The court commented on the gloomy and distressed air of the favourite; it was remarked that the King had not left Versailles during the whole week when Madame de Choiseul was on duty with Mesdames. The rumour of the Marquise's disgrace already rose in a vague murmur and spread through Versailles, when an unexpected and really improbable blow brought ruin upon the intrigue which D'Argenson and Madame d'Estrades had conducted with such mystery and almost brought to a successful issue. Madame de Choiseul had received a letter from the King. Somewhat embarrassed, for if she was ready to give herself to the King, she had no intention of yielding before she had secured all the honours and prerogatives of the post of acknowledged mistress, Madame de Choiseul, before replying, consulted one of her relations, the Comte de Stainville, afterwards Duc de Choiseul.

¹ *Mémoires du Marquis d'Argenson.* Vol. iv.

The Comte de Stainville took the King's letter, and asked Madame de Choiseul to wait a day before replying. He was, at that time, one of Madame de Pompadour's most impassioned enemies. He called himself the *Chevalier de Maurepas*, as though the fraternity of like passions and kindred hates made him the minister's younger brother. A revolt of his pride at the thought of a Choiseul becoming a King's mistress, or, more likely, an inspiration and reaction of ambition, wrought a sudden conversion in the Comte de Stainville. He asked Madame de Pompadour for an audience, and handed her the letter, telling her that if he had no affection for the favourite, he was full of respect for her; that he believed she was useful to the King; that, notwithstanding, she was under no obligation to him for the step he had taken out of regard for the peace and prosperity of the State. The rest of the interview between the favourite of Louis XV. and the future Prime Minister of his reign was spent in combining methods for the overthrow of the schemes of the Comtesse de Choiseul,¹ and the Comte de Stainville so thoroughly instructed Madame de Pompadour that Madame d'Estrades received an order not to sup any more in the private apartments, and Madame d'Estrades was forbidden to receive her.²

Madame de Pompadour was well aware that all this intrigue had been carried on by Madame d'Estrades, assisted by the advice of D'Argenson; but she did not feel strong enough to dismiss her former friend; for the moment, she contented herself with ostentatiously quarrelling with her. Meanwhile, D'Argenson, whose skilful manœuvres were rehabilitating his credit and attaching to his party all the friends of Madame de Pompadour who had cooled down towards her, Boulogne, Rouillé, Puysieux, Saint-Severin, who was even enlisting the brothers Paris, temporarily ill-disposed towards the Marquise; D'Argenson

¹ *Portraits et Caractères*, par Senac de Meilhan. Dentu, 1813.

² *Mémoires du Marquis d'Argenson*. Vol. iv.

more solidly established than ever with the Queen, and the pious coteries hostile to Madame de Pompadour, defied the favourite by disdaining to see her, and braving the rumours of his displacement in the ministry by M. de Lucé, audaciously unmasking, confessing his aim and his resources, closeted himself for four hours a day with Madame d'Estrades, and pushed her with all his might into the favour of Mesdames, the centre of the resentments of the Royal family. Madame de Pompadour thought, for a moment, to be rid of D'Argenson's redoubtable ally, by accusing the D'Estrades of having received a bribe of 56,000 livres. But the D'Estrades extricated herself from this business which besmirched a kinsman of D'Argenson, the Comte de Maillebois, and added fresh fuel to the anger and passions of the Comte d'Argenson. A moment came, when the favourite was rendered so uneasy by the fresh ground that D'Argenson was gaining daily with the Royal family, that she attempted a reconciliation in that quarter ; she made lively entreaties, went so far as to throw herself at the King's feet, in order to obtain for Madame Adelaïde the apartment communicating by a staircase with the apartment of the King : a vain overture, and one which turned against her. The King, having his children in his vicinity, took pleasure in conversing with them. The father's heart expanded in the ease and habit of these intimate visits ; and this advance of the mistress, which was meant to appease the hostility of the Royal family, only gave it a louder voice, a more confident ardour. At the same time, Madame d'Estrades united to the favour of Mesdames, the support of the Maréchal de Duras, and increased her credit. All things seemed to unite against Madame de Pompadour, both the arrangement of internal affairs, the pacification of the Parliament, which restored D'Argenson to the King's favour, and the King's reflections upon the luxury and expenditure of the Marquise which had been published, spread abroad and exaggerated by Madame d'Estrades ; but the disappearance of a letter

changed the face of things. Madame de Pompadour, sick and in bed for the day, had received a letter from the King, in which the King spoke of the parliaments. The letter had been left open on a little table by her bed-side. The Comtesse d'Estrades had been to pay her court to Madame de Pompadour; when the Comtesse had left, the letter was missing. Such was, at least, the story, the accusation of Madame de Pompadour, who, waxing wroth upon this violation of state-secrets, and this personal insult to Royalty, asked the King for Madame d'Estrades' dismissal. The King resisted, and laid stress on the liking which Mesdames entertained for Madame d'Estrades. Madame de Pompadour hastened immediately to Madame Adelaïde, whom she knew to be temporarily displeased with her familiar confidante, and obtained from her a declaration that "she found Madame d'Estrades sufficiently tiresome." She went back to the King with this declaration; and there, in a scene upon which she brought to bear all the art of an actress, her coquetry, her tears, the supreme effort of a woman at the end of a long and dubious battle, she persuaded the King, an hour after he had invited Madame d'Estrades to supper, to send Madame d'Estrades a *lettré de cachet*, banishing her from Versailles. This disgrace did not intimidate D'Argenson, who passed the evening with Madame d'Estrades on the very day of her dismissal. He took a house for her, and established her at Chaillot, on the road to Versailles, within reach of her friends. Whilst redoubling his attentions to the King, he refused to enter into any arrangement with the favourite, from whom he pretended to have received a direct affront in the dismissal of his friend, the Comtesse d'Estrades. And his patient hatred awaited circumstance and opportunity, and found consolation for delay, by secretly undermining the Marquise in the society of Versailles and the houses of Paris, surreptitiously favouring the pamphlets, and surrounding her with annoyances and whispers.¹

¹ *Mémoires du Marquis d'Argenson.* Vols. iii. and iv.

Thus we see that the whole life of Madame de Pompadour, so triumphant in externals, revealing itself to the public as so assured of its to-morrow, so well established in a facile and continued reign, is at bottom and in private but a long and wretched anxiety, the daily torment of a disputed domination, ceaselessly compelled to struggle upon the territory of the present moment, which it is with difficulty it possesses. No period of her favour attains to the full and peaceful enjoyment of favour, to that security and confidence which more fortunate favourites found in the frankness of heart, the sure affection, the faithful instincts of their royal lovers. For Madame de Pompadour, not an instant's repose, not a moment of self-abandonment: even in the relaxation of love she must spy upon the King, with presence of mind and coolness seek beneath the lying mask of the man the secrets of the master. All day she must force herself to a perpetual comedy; the gaiety on her lips, the tranquillity of her brow, the readiness of her smile, quick answers and light songs must mask and conceal the preoccupation and the labour, the machinations of a fixed idea and an obstinate will on the look-out for arms, resources, supports, means of attack and defence. She must live intent upon the court, intent upon all those souls she seeks to fathom, intent upon the extracts from letters submitted to her by the postmaster Jannelle, intent upon the reports of Berryer, lieutenant of police, with whom she closets herself to talk in whispers. She is consumed by nights of insomnia, when discouragement and the doubts that come in darkness and solitude ruin the hopes and projects of the day; she spends her time, influenced by Lebel, in mean condescensions, in observation, espionage, suspicion, in a continual distrust of the friendships which surround her, and the women who fawn upon her. She lives in a terror and an anxious curiosity, on guard and tremulous, subject to cold sweats for a letter found in the King's pocket, for a look, a word that the King throws at ■

woman ; sick, tortured, feverish, and ever pursued by the shadow of a rival, whom she sees at every turn, issuing from her company, advancing from court, coming from Paris, whom she hears, scents—who intrudes! . . . Might not one think to see the circle of fatal agitation, the punishment ever renewed by renewed efforts of the great expiations of paganism? And is it not Madame de Pompadour herself, who calls her life that life which can not sleep, when she compares it to the Christian life, "*a perpetual combat*"? Poor favourite! How many times, when the mask of her smile and her serenity has been discarded, the door of her apartment shut, and her royalty left in the antechamber, history, in the wake of her chamber-maid, surprises her as she throws down her mantle and her muff with a nervous gesture, and in the first vehemence and rush of her wrath, in that state of bodily and mental undress when passion will find a vent, bursts out in bitter and stifling complaints of the insolence of a Madame de Coislin at the card-table, of her sufferings, of the torture of that greedy, furious and inexorable curiosity, which makes a circle round her to revel in the clouds upon her forehead and the cares which devour her, of that *Va tout* said in an insulting fashion and with what a look! the gaze of the favourite of to-morrow upon the favourite of to-day,¹ of the gaming-tables of kings, and that courtesy with which the King seemed to encourage irony and insult. . . . Resentments of a moment, wounds still bleeding, terrors at unfavourable omens, bitternesses, recriminations,

¹ The check sustained by Madame de Coislin—the haughty Vashti, as she was called—was chiefly due to the opening of the letter of a certain councillor, writing to one of his friends as follows:—

“ It is but just that the King should have a friend, ■ confidante, as all of us, whatever our estate, when it suits us; but 'tis to be hoped that he will keep the one he has; she is gentle, does no harm to anyone, and has made her fortune. The lady spoken of will have all the pride which comes from great birth. It will be necessary to give her a million a year, and make dukes, provincial governors, marshals, of her relations, who will end by surrounding the King and making his ministers totter.” (*Mémoires de Madame du Hausset.*)

Was not this letter from the hand of Madame de Pompadour?

which verge upon despair, rendered how many evenings of the favourite desolate and sent her to bed so often in despair !

But this torture was not sufficient, this ceaseless struggle against the seductions of beauty, the attempts of effrontery, the projects of ambition, underhand intrigues, dark hostilities, Madame de Pompadour was also obliged to fight herself and labour after self-victory. The favourite, in the midst of so many efforts, had to do violence to her temperament and compel it to those ardours which were exacted by the ardours of the King. To counteract age and disgust, sickness, weariness, and nature she called in the aid of provocatives and drugs. She had recourse to irritatives, stimulants, herbs and philtres, to those fires which medicine borrows from the East to give fever to love. She sought from them the strength and zeal for her part of courtesan, the half of her task as favourite ; and she killed herself in triumphing over her body, the natural instinct of her senses, her "*fish-like coldness*"—it is the phrase she uses, by a diet which at once stung and inflamed the blood.

A day came when the favourite's body, harassed and shrunken, constrained to pleasure, and capable of nothing more, broke down beneath the woman's will. Madame de Pompadour lost hope and had no longer the courage to retain the desires of the King, whose bed-chamber opened its doors to fresh amours, and began to be known as the *trébuchet*, the name of a snare in which small birds are caught. A model of Boucher, the painter,¹ the type of the wanton Rubens, the fleshly woman, with a soft body all bestarred with dimples, whose study and portrait he has repeated so often in his fat Academies of women, paved the way for these obscure *liaisons* of the King, which were soon to be ensconced in the *Parc aux Cerfs*.—The young person was a demoiselle Murphy, of Irish origin, commonly known as the little Morfil, sister of the

¹ *Histoire de Madame la Marquise de Pompadour.* 1759.

chief model at the Academy of Painting, of which she had the reversion.¹ What was most remarkable in this caprice of the King, was that the girl had not been presented by Lebel: it was Madame de Pompadour herself who, setting the King's senses at liberty, without renouncing the government of that liberty, sought to protect herself from the danger and the ambitions of a serious rival by the choice of a rival without consequence and without a future. It was she, so Soulavie declares, who had tempted the King with the Morfil, by having the charming child painted in a Holy Family, with which the pious Marie-Leczinska adorned the walls of her oratory;² and the King, whose attention was called to that young body, that celestial beauty, was not slow in satisfying the secret desire of Madame de Pompadour, who shut her eyes to the purchase of a little house destined to shelter the little Morfil on her issue from the garrets of Versailles where the King had hidden her.³

¹ *Mémoires du Marquis d'Argenson.* Vol. iv.

² *Mémoires Historiques de la Cour de France pendant la faveur de Madame de Pompadour.* 1802.

³ For the list, much exaggerated by the pamphleteers and historians of the Revolution, of the women who passed through the Parc aux Cerfs, and have no history, we refer the curious to the *Mémoires de Richelieu de Soulavie*, and the pamphlets *Le Parc aux Cerfs, ou l'Origine de l'affreux Déficit*, 1790. Here we will merely give the few details which are required by historical truth, and show the fabulous element in the prejudices and legends concerning the Parc aux Cerfs. The Parc aux Cerfs is not the estate of the Hermitage, presented to the King by Madame de Pompadour, it is not the legendary seraglio of historians and novelists, it is a quite small and humble house with a little garden, shut in by the blind alley of the Rue des Tournelles and the Rue Saint-Médéric, containing four rooms and a few closets, capable of housing two or three women at the most, and seemingly built rather for the accommodation of only one, a supposition corroborated by the account of Madame du Hausset, the account of Mercier, Commissioner of War, who superintended the education of the Abbé de Bourbon, and the document discovered and published by M. Leroy.

This was the declaration made by Vallet, appraiser at the Châtelet, who was charged with the task of purchasing the little house in his own name. "This day appeared before the Councillors of the King, notaries at the Châtelet of Paris, undersigned, the Sieur François Vallet, appraiser of the said Châtelet of Paris, dwelling in the Rue des Déchargeurs, in the parish of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, who has declared that he has no share or pretension in the acquisition made in his name from Jean Michel Denis Cremer and his wife, of a house situated at Versailles, Rue Saint-Médéric, parish of Saint-Louis, with its dependencies, by contract made before the undersigned notaries, one

For four or five years, the habitual frequenters of the Cabinets, the King's intimates, were spreading abroad a report that there no longer existed between Louis XV. and Madame de Pompadour anything more than a Platonic relation. They said that the two lovers were only held together by immaterial bonds, sympathies of temper, a community of tastes, the convention of habit, a spiritual union having succeeded to mutual passion and the commerce of the senses. And Madame de Pompadour seemed to make this change public and declare the conversion by the fine statue in the gardens of Bellevue, which showed her to the court and the public in the likeness of that goddess of old unions and spiritual connections: the Goddess of Friendship.¹ She had barely embarked on this part, when Madame de Pompadour saw in it the renewal and confirmation of a power shaken free of the mutability of love, its caprices and fluctuations. She conceived of making her new position a sort of political superintendence, the rule of a King's companion; and she already saw herself saving Louis XV. from the serious part of affairs and the cares of power by her womanly graces and the niceliest played optimism, bringing to complications,

of whom, Maître Patu, has the minute this day; but that this acquisition is *in behalf of and for the profit of the King, the price having been paid with money furnished to him by His Majesty for that purpose*; wherefore he makes this declaration consenting that his Majesty shall enjoy, use and dispose of the said house as absolute owner, and that the payment, which is made in the name of the applicant, of the rights and dues of the sale and the *centième denier*, the voluntary decree which shall be made and adjudged, and the enjoyment and collection of rents, which may be likewise made under his name, *shall not detract from the ownership vested in His Majesty, of the said house and its dependencies*, declaring that the fulfilment of the said deed of acquisition, and the titles enumerated therein, have been delivered by him into the hands of the Commissioner of his Majesty's commands, which has been accepted for his Majesty by the notary undersigned."—"Paris, year 1755, November the 25th. Vallet-Patu."

And under Madame Dubarry, who seized the King's heart for herself alone, the house bought from the Cremers by the King was resold on the 27th of May 1771, to Jean Baptiste Sevin, usher of the chamber of Madame Victoire of France, who paid 16,000 livres for it.—*Histoire Anecdotique des rues de Versailles*, par M. Leroy.—*Le Parc aux Cerfs*, par M. Lacour. Meugnot, 1859.

¹ *Mémoires du Marquis d'Argenson.* Vol. iv.

to the irritating debates of parties, a mediation full of gentleness and subtlety, even intervening, as a friend and mediator, between the King and the Royal family. But before playing this personage and attaining this authority, Madame de Pompadour needed the official state of grace of a Maintenon, that pardon of the Church which is the absolution of a priest. Whilst the astonished court discussed under its breath the grace which seemed to have descended upon the patroness of Voltaire, the blocking up of the communications between the apartments of the King and those of the favourite, Madame de Pompadour was looking for the complacent instrument of a ceremony which was to be the public declaration of her conversion, the loud acknowledgment of her present purity, the guarantee of the cessation of all scandal. For this end she had cast her eyes upon a Jesuit, the Père Sacy, a holy man of the day, indulgent to others, lenient to the frailties of the age, easy-going and accommodating, with all the credulity of a noble soul, little skilled in tricks of the conscience and the cheats of repentance; uniting, in a word, all the virtues of a gossip of good faith. The Père Sacy took the work in hand, and laboured hard to conciliate everything, endeavouring to bring God within Madame de Pompadour's reach, and to accommodate, as they said in those days, the things of this world with the things of Heaven. He was supported in the Church itself by the party opposed to the rigour of the Père Boyer, by a whole host of pious folk, who, sighing for the favours of the favourite, were not sorry to have in her salvation an opportunity and pretext for approaching her. Instead of rebuffing by severity and excessive demands the advances of Madame de Pompadour, was it not better to detach her gently and without harshness from the philosophic society which she patronised, and whose audacities and victories she surreptitiously encouraged, to convert her by small doses, conquer her by kindness, accustom her, at first, to the externals of religion, leading her little by little to the

faith, waiting until the years should cast her upon it, and she should draw there with her the conscience of the King? Thus spoke the friends of the Père Sacy and the apologists of his delicate undertaking. However, the Père Sacy's negotiations dragged on interminably. He hesitated, faltered; he answered requests for solemn confession, absolution, with dilatory words which revealed the embarrassment of his diplomacy and the troubles of his conscience. There were long confabulations, in which he sought to refuse nothing while promising nothing, meeting Madame de Pompadour's impatience with the laws of the Church, his private scruples, the considerations he owed to his order. In the middle of these disagreements, the conferences became known, and at the news that the Père Sacy frequented Madame de Pompadour, had long interviews with her, confessed her, indignation flamed forth from the austere clergy and the religious party of the Dauphin; the bigots revolted against the laxities and compromises of the confessor, who allowed his penitent rouge and all mundane accessories. The protestations were so strong, threatened to go so far, that the Père Sacy's superiors ordered him to discontinue his visits and to cease to uphold Madame de Pompadour in the illusion that she could be reconciled with the Church whilst she retained her position as regards the King. In a final interview, the Père Sacy declared to Madame de Pompadour that her residence at court, separated from her husband, in a favour which the public was united in deeming a scandal, rendered absolution impossible; and his last word was that if she desired to fulfil the duties of a Christian, it was necessary for her to be reunited with M. d'Étioles, or, at least, to leave the court.¹ This was not the programme of Madame de Pompadour, who contemplated a conversion for motives of decency and on the spot, and who wished, by her conversion, to win over a religious

¹ *Mémoires Historiques et Anecdotes de la Cour de France pendant la faveur de Madame de Pompadour.*

party which she might have played against the party of the Queen and the Dauphin, or, at any rate, to disarm the Jesuit party. Wounded and sore, therefore, at having been played with so long, she dismissed the Père Sacy with an anger which was later to fall upon the destinies of his Society.

This withdrawal of the Père Sacy was a defeat all the more poignant to Madame de Pompadour, owing to the fact that, in order to regularise her position at court, she had just asked for a place as lady of the palace to the Queen. The Queen, ordinarily so pliant and submissive, revolted at this last blow. She caused remonstrances to be made to the King, pointing out that the indecency would be too flagrant, were she to grant this place to a person who was living in an illegitimate state of separation from her husband. She concluded by saying that "His Majesty might command what seemed good to him; that she would always make a duty of obedience, but that she hoped he himself would have too much respect for the Royal family to put such an affront upon it; that the place in question required an honour unequivocal, and too delicate to be bestowed upon an excommunicated woman who dared not even pretend to the general benefit of the Easter Communion." And it was at this moment, when absolution had become so pressing a necessity, if the Queen's mouth was to be shut and the place obtained, that the Père Sacy retired, taking with him the hopes and promises with which he had soothed the favourite. The court and the public laughed, when Madame de Pompadour thought she had found a means of satisfying the Church whilst playing with it. She wrote her husband a long letter, in which she humiliated herself, decried her errors, feigned remorse, and finished by asking him to take her back, begging him to allow her to edify the world by the harmony with which she would live with him. But, while this letter is being written, Soubise, the most devoted of courtiers, repairs to M. d'Étoiles; he tells him that in

a few hours he will receive a letter from Madame de Pompadour, that he is absolutely free to do as he likes, that there is not the least pretension to force his wishes, but that the advice of a friend is that he should not accept the offers made in the letter; that, were he to do so, it might be disagreeable to the King.

M. d'Étioles, who had had leisure to decide his course and find his consolations, who had turned from a husband after Molière's fashion into a philosopher in the mode of Horace, pleasure-loving and tranquil, drowning the past and the future in good wine and easy amours, with no other ambition in life beyond his repose, pleasure, and oblivion, M. d'Étioles thought no more of his wife except to submit his demands to her, through the Abbé Bayle, with these terrible words: "Tell my wife that I shall go to the Château, that I am determined, and that I will make its beams and rafters ring with the justice of what I ask and demand." Leading a pleasant, joyous, bachelor life in the handsome Hôtel, with lacquer blinds, with galleries of mirrors garlanded with flowers, which a comedy concocted between Madame de Pompadour and Bourret had obtained for him for the ridiculous price of a hundred thousand livres,¹ the man who was to end by marrying the little Rem, was not in the least inclined to find house-room for so zealous a penitent and such exemplary repentance as that with which Madame de Pompadour threatened him. The official communication of M. de Soubise found him completely resigned to the King's commands. He hastened to reply to Madame de Pompadour, in the most respectful of terms, that he forgave her, with his whole heart, but was very far from desiring to take her back. On the receipt of this refusal, which she was impatiently awaiting, Madame de Pompadour burst out in complaints and lamentations. She had sinned, she knew it, she repeated it, but she

¹ *Histoire de Madame la Marquise de Pompadour.* Londres, Hooper à la Tête de César, 1759.

had repented, she had vainly solicited the consecration of her repentance. And how could she be any longer reproached with living apart from her husband when that husband repudiated her! The Père Sacy was left without arguments. The Church thought it had held out long enough for its dignity. The Queen, beaten, but not duped, by Madame de Pompadour's manœuvre, was forced to submit to the favourite's nomination to the place of lady of her palace. Her only protestation was this phrase, so prettily sublime, in which she accepted her chalice with the simplicity, the grace, and the spirit of a saint: "*Sire, I have a King in Heaven who gives me strength to bear my sufferings, and a King upon earth whom I shall ever obey.*"¹

On Sunday, the 8th of February 1756, the Marquise de Pompadour, who had obtained the stool and honours of a Duchess on the 18th of October 1752, began her week of duty with the Queen, at the grand table, in a superb toilette.

The light sceptre of a King's mistress, the government of favours and the command of pleasures no longer sufficed Madame de Pompadour. She dreamed of surviving herself, and, wishing to figure beyond the fleeting moment in the age of Louis XV., all her ambitions were directed to recommending the memory of her name to posterity by creations and monuments which time respects, and which seem to prolong the favour of a favourite into the future. This popularity which Madame de Pompadour sought to attach to her reign, she sought at the outset, and passionately pursued in the order of her tastes. She created the manufactory of Sèvres, whose products, endowing French industry with an artistic porcelain, were to rob Saxony of the tribute paid to it by Europe, and no longer to leave to the foreigners an art, a taste, a fashion, an elegance which was not a source of revenue to France. And was it not a sore

¹ *Mémoires et Anecdotes de la Cour de France.*

wound to the artistic patriotism of the favourite to see the whole host of merchants and commissioners hurrying to Dresden, and disputing that porcelain which had deceived the finest connoisseurs of Amsterdam, and made the King of Poland resolve not to manufacture a single piece of porcelain without his mark and arms.¹ To rival, to ruin Dresden china by a china made in France became the Marquise's fixed idea. She will not be discouraged by the imperfection of the results, the half success of the attempts made at Mennecy, at Villeroy, and at Chantilly, where, in spite of the waggons that bring earth from Saxony, and the revelations as to the methods of manufacture made by the Comte d'Hoyn, punished for his indiscretion with disgrace, there issued from the furnaces only pieces far inferior, both for the substance and the enamelling, to the fine pieces of Saxony.²

The manufactory of Vincennes, already transferred to Sèvres, was installed by her in the vast building, which still stands at the present day, in spite of the gloomy forebodings of the Marquis d'Argenson. She calls in the chemists, urges them to fresh efforts, new attempts, to those trials and experiments with all the clay in France, which were to lead to the discovery of the Kaolin of Saint-Yriex in 1765.³ A whole army of skilled workmen, painters of flowers and landscapes, sculptors, is put at Bachelier's disposal. The Marquise has Sèvres proclaimed a royal factory, like the Savonnerie and the Gobelins, and compels the King to take a third share in the enterprise. She makes Sèvres the habitual goal of her excursions, she lavishes her superintendence, her interest, her inspiration, the ideas or the counsels of her fantasy on that workshop of frail ware which was destined to outlive the monarchy. She protects the establishment, encourages the artists, bespeaks zeal and enthusiasm through the

¹ *Le Glaneur Historique et Moral*, 1732. No. 7.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Histoire de la Porcelaine*, par Brogniart.

gauntlet she flings down to the King of Saxony, by sending him a service which she declared to be superior to any yet produced. She starts, in short, and determines the fortune of Sèvres ware by exhibitions in the Château of Versailles, by the warmth of her praise, the example of her custom, by all the means that a favourite possesses of imposing a new taste and an unforeseen expense upon a court, by that patronage, the passion of which is revealed to us in one of her sayings: "Not to buy this china, so long as one has any money, is to prove oneself a bad citizen."¹

But there was another creation to which Madame de Pompadour devoted herself even more completely, and upon which her ambitions were most heavily staked. She conceived the idea of completing the noble conception of Louis XIV., and making a pendant to the Invalides by the foundation of a military college which should make the King the father of the sons of soldiers killed in the wars or ruined in the service.² It was a dream, which, no sooner conceived, became a project, a fever, a passion; she was absorbed and enraptured by it, and her mental impulse towards this great undertaking is so keen and genuine that it seems, at moments, to enlarge her heart. At the outset, the favourite's idea is a secret, a secret so well kept that the majority of historians attribute the project to the Comte d'Argenson; but it is an honour which must be rendered to Madame de Pompadour, after the perusal of this letter written by her on the 18th September 1750, on her return from a visit to Saint-Cyr.

"We went the day before yesterday to Saint-Cyr. I cannot tell you how much emotion I felt at the sight of this establishment, as well as of all therein; they all came to tell me that a similar one should be founded for men. This made me want to laugh, for they will

¹ *Mémoires et Journal du Marquis d'Argenson.* Vol. iv.

² *Étrennes françoises, dédiées à la Ville de Paris.* Guillaume Simon, 1766.

think when our affair transpires, that it was they who gave me the notion."¹

From that day forward we find the Marquise de Pompadour plotting with Paris Duvergney, "*her beloved booby.*"² She asks him for plans, makes him study Saint-Cyr and its organisation, urges him to join his brother in seeking for the most suitable field for her project. It is a flood of letters, projects, devices, and an immense impatience for the spring, when the foundation stone of the edifice is to be laid! The Marquise never brought more fire or spirit to an affair of her own. In a letter of the 9th of November she writes: "I have been enchanted to see the King now concerning himself with the details. I am on fire to see the thing made public, since after that it will be impossible to draw back. I count on your eloquence to seduce M. de Machault, although I deem him too much attached to the King to thwart his glory. In short, my dear Duvergney, I count upon your vigilance presently to inform the universe. You will come to see me on Thursday, I hope. I need not tell you how charmed I shall be, and that I love you with all my heart."³

¹ Autograph Letter of Madame de Pompadour.—(Archives of the Empire.)

² We quote here a curious letter from Paris-Duvergney to Madame de Pompadour upon this creation of the military school :

"26 May 1750.

"Madame, it is not my intention to add aught to the conception you may have formed of the present state of affairs. If they are not in themselves of such a nature as one may look upon as vexatious, they have this drawback, at least, that one must consider them as the result of a fermentation which befits neither the love which the master expects and desires from his subjects, nor that which he bears them. You have thought, Madame, that the project you cherish would be calculated to effect a diversion. I go further, and think that the favour it bestows upon the nobility and the army is one of those objects which ought, at the present time, to give it precedence over every other consideration. It is, indeed, in the nobility and the army that the State finds its defence and staunchest support, even against those internal troubles which might damage its stability. It seems to me, therefore, Madame, that one cannot do too much to stimulate the zeal and fidelity of these two corporations at a time when one might, perhaps, have cause of complaint with the others."—(Archives of the Empire.)

³ Autograph Letter of Madame de Pompadour.—(Archives of the Empire.)

And through the ensuing years, the desire, the activity, the passion and zeal of the Marquise never falter. She encourages and discusses the propositions of Duvergney. In order to endow the establishment, she seeks funds with him by means of a tax upon playing-cards ; she soothes the altercations of her brother Marigny and Paris-Duvergney upon the subject of the buildings. She orders the internal arrangements of the school ; she interests the King in the digging up of the earth for foundations, and when, at one moment, in 1755, money is lacking, when Madame de Pompadour sees that long cherished dream of her young school manœuvring to the sound of drums before the King's eyes, on the point of vanishing, she takes up her pen and writes with an accent of grandeur and generous emotion : "No, most certainly, my dear booby, I will not allow to founder in harbour an establishment destined to render the King immortal, to give his nobility happiness, and testify my attachment for the State and for the person of his Majesty to posterity. I told Gabriel to-day to make arrangements to send the workmen necessary for the completion of the work to Grenelle. My revenues for this year have not yet come in ; I shall devote them in their entirety for the payment of the weekly wage-bills of the labourers. I know not whether I shall find sureties for my repayment, but I am very sure that I will risk a hundred thousand livres with great satisfaction for the welfare of these poor children. Good-night, dear booby. If you are able to come to Paris on Tuesday, I shall have much pleasure in seeing you ; if you can not come, send your nephew to me about six o'clock."¹

During these years, while Madame de Pompadour was struggling to make a name in history, it happened that the course of events and the dissensions of empires were giving her the redoubtable responsibility of the part played by France in the long war which was to

¹ *Mélanges de la Société des Bibliophiles.* Vol. vi.

dissipate the treasure and blood of Europe, to cost two milliards, and very nearly a million of men, to bequeath to France and so many other States the financial embarrassments of the end of the eighteenth century, and, in certain provinces of Germany, to annihilate whole races, the hope and the reserve for the enlistment of the future. Madame de Pompadour paid the penalty for her ambitions. She answered to her contemporaries for the disasters of this war; the wretched consequences of our alliance with Austria. Public opinion through all its voices, the eighteenth century by all its pens, have charged her with all that bloodshed, with all the faults, errors, disasters, betrayals of fortune or administrators, with the incapacity of men as well as the fatality of circumstances. French valour, in amazement at the Frederick for whom the philosophers had created, with so much zeal, a popularity with his enemies, humiliated France, have cursed Madame de Pompadour. The defeats of Rosbach and Creveldt have condemned her policy: have they judged her?

Let us dismiss, at the outset, the circumstances, the motives, which may have had a share in influencing the mind of Madame de Pompadour towards the Austrian alliance—questions of vanity, private interests, selfish sentiments, the petty and passionate motives, to which her enemies have ascribed her determination. Admit that, in this great alteration in French policy, Madame de Pompadour was swayed by the resentments as by the satisfactions of a woman's vanity; that she was animated by a desire to be avenged for the jests of Frederick, the nickname of *Cotillon IV.*; that she was actuated by a complacent zeal, a *parvenu's* gratitude towards the Queen-Empress who treated her as an equal, and called her familiarly *her cousin, her princess, her friend*; that she had, at bottom, the inevitable ambition to inaugurate a new and contrary policy which marks the advent of every new mistress who ousts a rival;

that she leaned to the Austrian alliance because Madame de Châteauroux had favoured the alliance with Prussia ; that she yielded to that necessity and fatality inseparable from the position of a favourite which was afterwards to throw Madame du Barry into all the alliances hostile to Austria : it matters little. The secret motives of the Austrian alliance, no more than its lack of success, ought to enter into our judgment of the principle of that alliance. Take that principle, just as it was acknowledged until Rosbach, extricate it from its origins : it remains in its essence and in its general outline the evolution of a wise and salutary policy for France.

Austria was no longer the gigantic monarchy, extending from Turkey to Burgundy, and from Belgium to the heart of Italy, that world upon which, a proverb insisted, the sun never set, that empire which had made with the five vowels of the alphabet the device of its dream and its future—*Austriae Est Imperare Orbi Universo*.

France, as we have said in another book,¹ between Henry IV. and Louis XIV., by the policy of Richelieu and Mazarin, "by its long pursuit of German and Spanish Austria against which the great King, all through his life, had urged his generals and his victories," even by the good luck of the easy-going Cardinal de Fleury, forcibly depriving Austria, in two wars, or clipping from her, little by little, in negotiations, the Kingdom of Naples, and the Two Sicilies, Lorraine and Barrois ; France had confined the Empire of Charles V. within limits which could no longer threaten the equilibrium of Europe. Through the efforts, the reprisals and the attacks of France, that great military power, directing a part of its energies towards agriculture, had become less formidable to her old enemy than the little State of Prussia, which had arisen like an army upon the map of Europe, having no natural frontiers, to seek its place in Germany, with the tents of its 150,000 men and the genius of Frederick. The menace of the

¹ *Histoire de Marie-Antoinette.*

North against the South, of Germany against France, had evidently shifted ; the alliances of France should rightly follow this readjustment, conform to the great law of the relations of peoples which sees that nothing is immutable, which adapts conditions to the moment, political treaties to circumstances, political systems to facts, and forces politics to be that science of poise and counter-poise, which is regulated by the changing forces of Empire, by the extension or diminution of States, sacrificing the passions of yesterday to the interests of to-morrow, the hatreds of the past to the necessities of the present. The old French party, therefore, which would not abandon the distrust of the old national tradition, and persisted in seeing the monarchy of Charles V. in the States of Maria-Theresa, misjudged Madame de Pompadour, who rightly saw in the alliance of two great powers of equal and like strength a sort of European police, and finally, a means of intimidating that other power, which had risen to the first rank amongst the powers of Europe, England, envious of our colonies, which were necessary to her commerce, England, who, in a time of peace, in despite of the right of nations, had just seized our vessels the *Alcide* and the *Lys*. The alliance between France and Austria was being slowly prepared long before it transpired. It was latent, so to speak, ever since the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, when Maria-Theresa had been forced to abandon Silesia to Prussia. M. de Kaunitz had, vainly, at that time, sounded M. de Saint-Severin, sent by Madame de Pompadour in order to make peace at any price, as to the question of an alliance with France. The court of Austria did not lose heart, and Maria-Theresa, giving expression to a remarkable inclination she had conceived for Louis XV., begged Blondel, the French ambassador at the court of Austria, to inform Versailles that the existing situation of the crowns of France and Austria was not as it had been two hundred years before ; that the balance between them was perfect, and that their

union would be a guarantee for the peace of Europe. But the Marquis de Puysieux, Minister for Foreign Affairs, who, like M. de Saint-Severin, had his vanity involved in the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, and had no mind to see his work undone, did not think fit to mention this overture. The Queen, without being discouraged, repeated it to the Marquis d'Hautefort, our new ambassador, laying stress upon the influence a man of rank would have over the ministry. About the same period, the Comte de Kaunitz was sent to Paris. At the first glance, he had the wit to weigh the situation and discover the person in whose hands depended the success of Maria-Theresa's wishes. He went straight to Madame de Pompadour, made much of her, flattered her temper and secret inclinations, her proud hopes; he urged her delicately and with light words to the part she was desirous of playing, to an unfettered reign beyond the private apartments, to one of those influences which fix upon a woman the gaze of posterity. He dropped upon her flattered and attentive ambition the heads of a treaty which would free France from the burden and embarrassment of subsidies, so difficult to obtain, check the evil disposition of England, by the dread of losing her Electorate of Hanover,—and it would be peace at last, a peace to which one could not see an ending. From the first day, Madame de Pompadour fell in with the views of M. de Kaunitz; but meeting with opposition from the ministers, opposition from the whole Council, she told M. de Kaunitz that he must wait, and that the alliance with Prussia was still too recent. Kaunitz was too clever to insist. He caused the Comte de Staremberg to replace him, and left it to time to ripen the words he had sown in the mind of Madame de Pompadour.¹ During this period the English seized the *Lys* and the *Alcide* (1755); they had carried the war into our American colonies, taking advantage of the frivolity of

¹ *Mémoires Secrets sur les Règnes de Louis XIV. et Louis XV.*, par feu M. Duclos. Buisson, 1791, vol. ii.

our ambassador in London, M. de Mirepoix, who, recking only of maintaining his reputation as a gallant and good dancer, amused himself for six months with their piracies and let them take from us 10,000 sailors.

In spite of the repugnance of the King and Council, war had to be resolved upon. But a war between France and England could not be a mere spectacle for the other powers: it must drag Europe in its wake, behind the struggle between the two peoples. It was necessary to be armed abroad, to renew or change alliances, to accept the offer of an alliance with Austria or the offer of a renewal of the alliance with the King of Prussia, an alliance which came to an end in the month of June 1756. The Council was divided upon this great question. D'Argenson, in his quality of Minister of War, being desirous of a land war, was disposed to accept the propositions of the King of Prussia. Machault wished France to confine herself to a naval war; with him were Puysieux, Saint-Severin, the Maréchal de Noailles. Rouillé supported D'Argenson in public, but with mental reservations, and secret efforts in favour of the policy of Madame de Pompadour and the Abbé de Bernis, who did not assist at the Council, but to whom Madame de Pompadour communicated everything. In the midst of these disputes and dissensions in the Council, which brought embarrassment, trouble, a tone of ambiguity, and bad faith into our foreign relations, the indiscretions of clients, friends, mistresses, of all who had access to, or were in the confidence of, the ministers, ran riot and left nothing unsaid. All the court spoke in whispers and sold the secrets of diplomacy to the curious. At the supper-parties of Compiègne, the policy of the mistress was like the secret of a comedy, bandied about from one pretty woman to another, lurking in the witticisms, madly betrayed, and handed over, as it were, by the pure mischief of Echo to the spies of Berlin.¹ Thus announced and

¹ *Mémoires Secrets de Duclos.* Vol. ii.

published in advance, the Austrian alliance was precipitated by a court intrigue. The Marquise, who caused Madame de Pompadour the sleepless nights of which we have spoken, and whose ambitions were only frustrated, according to Duclos, because she gave herself too easily to the King, the Marquise de Coislin was the recipient of the instigations of the Prince de Conti, who was acting in concert with the Comte de Staremburg. This influence, this competition of Madame de Coislin, irritated Madame de Pompadour, who saw a rival endeavouring to deprive her of the initiative in the projects which she had formed, the benefits of a system which pleased her. She threw herself with more ardour into the Austrian alliance, and resolutely entered upon a political rôle which was to give to her fragile and ever threatened situation as mistress, the authority, solidity, and stability of great ministerial credit. M. de Kaunitz, who had wind of these dispositions of Madame de Pompadour, reported them to his mistress as replete with gratitude, humility, and submission. By a master-stroke he persuaded Maria-Theresa to overcome her repugnance, and open a correspondence with Madame de Pompadour.¹ A flattering letter from the Queen-Empress triumphed over the last hesitations of Madame de Pompadour, and was the cause of her bringing to the affair, in which her interests were already engaged, the ardour and obstinacy which women bring to matters that flatter their passions and gratify their vanity. This resolution of Madame de Pompadour set free from her bed-chamber, her boudoir, a new personage, the favourite whom she received, while she made her toilette, with a little familiar and patronising slap upon the cheek, her friend, her courtier, her confidant and her *tame dove*, the Abbé de Bernis, who was destined to become, during the greater part of the duration of the Seven Years War, the official representative of the wishes of the favourite.

¹ *Mémoires Secrets de Duclos.* Vol. ii.

Issuing of a good stock, from the old *noblesse*, from a house to which the Château de Gauge had belonged ever since the twelfth century, Bernis, Comte de Brioude, born in the Vivarais, near the Pont Saint-Esprit, destined from his childhood to the priesthood, passed his youth at the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice, in that sort of school for episcopal pages, with as scanty resources as the rest of the younger sons of the nobility who have an eye upon the dignities and benefices of the Church; then, after being received into the chapter of Lyons, he came to Paris to live. Amongst his pleasing qualities, were a pretty face like a chubby angel's, a frank, open, and expansive character, a lively and Southern imagination, a fund of wit, set off by an accent half-Gascon, a facile genius for the light verse, the impromptus, the madrigals, which are woven round a woman's portrait like strings of pearls round a miniature. His manners were like those of a woman or a priest; he was gifted with gentleness and a playful spirit, a gallant unction; he was brisk and active, always bent upon pleasure; he lacked nothing of the vocation, the virtues and the very temperament of the mundane life: to miss his sleep cost him nothing. And what more was needed in those days to make a delightful abbé? The Abbé de Bernis soon became, in the words of the day, "a rare fashionable," naturally, and there is no need to pay attention to the legend of a milliner who protected him and presented him to ladies with the dresses he brought to them. Introduced by Duclos into the wit manufactory of Madame de Tencin, where a few poems prettily presented his slight muse, he went on living in the *cul de sac* Dauphin, soliciting with resignation the privilege of the *Mercure de France*, until a love conquest befell him; he became the attendant cavalier of Madame de Courcillon, the widow of the Prince de Rohan, and was greatly exercised in consoling her widowhood.

But this dissipation, this careless life, whose only business was pleasure, was looked upon with scant approval by

Saint-Sulpice and by the Cardinal de Fleury, who had promised the Abbé de Bernis' father to make his son's fortune. The Cardinal sent for the Abbé, and informed him that in his lifetime he should never obtain any benefice, to which Bernis replied : " Monseigneur, I shall wait." And he resumed his career of idleness and worldly agitation, and retained his epicurean philosophy. Forgetting to woo the future and get ready for fortune, quite indifferent to the indifference of his family, who did nothing for him, living on his emoluments as an academician, doing services to his friends, without thought of himself, and astonishing a world in which everyone struggled after a hope, an ambition, a position, by the grace and that sort of simple and easy dignity with which he bore poverty, he contented himself with the present. The greatest dreams he indulged in, when by an accident he thought of the future, did not extend beyond an abbey with an endowment of 6000 livres ; and yet, at moments, he had presentiments which, without puffing him up, came to light in this remark to his fellow-seminarists, to Montazet, afterwards Archbishop of Lyons, to La Rochefoucauld, since Cardinal, promising to set out after fortune : " I do not know when I shall make the resolution to set out ; but this I know, that as soon as I have made it and have started on the road, I shall pass you by."

In the meantime, while the Abbé was waiting to start, Madame de Courcillon, who was very intimate with Madame d'Étioles and Madame d'Estrades, took him to Étioles,¹ at a moment when Madame d'Étioles, little visited, and lacking company — the King was in the country, M. Lenormand on his rounds—was almost boring herself, and in that state of mind where the arrival of an unexpected guest is like a meeting with a friend. An intimacy was quickly established between the woman who was to become Madame de Pompadour and this fine, sentimental wit, who, beneath the eyes of the châtelaine

¹ *Le Conteure.* 1748, vol. ii.

of Étioles composed the *Four Seasons of the Day*. The intimacy was confirmed and fortified by the need that Madame d'Étioles had later of the pen of the Abbé de Bernis, who is supposed to have written for his friend her amorous correspondence with the King. Later, when Madame d'Étioles became Madame de Pompadour, when she was the favourite, the King, who had taken a real liking to her Abbé, chose Bernis to be of the habitual company, the daily society which he imposed upon his mistress; it was a preceptor, a director, as it were, whom he wished to give her, to guide her through the conventions of a court and teach her Versailles. Bernis, recommended to Boyer, who kept the list of benefices, saw Boyer, who promised him a bishopric if he would be ordained priest. Bernis refused; he declared, with the sincerity which all through his life was to be the greatness of his character, that he felt no inclination for the priesthood, and he went back to wait as patiently as possible. The King then resolved to give him a pension of 1500 livres out of his privy-purse and a lodging in the Tuileries, where the amiability of Madame de Pompadour delighted him vastly with the surprise of a set of furniture in brocatel. With this pension of 1500 livres ambition came to Bernis, suddenly, as order comes into the lives of young men when they inherit. He wanted, since he had begun, to complete the sum of his dreams, to bring up his income to 6000 livres. But, urged by this most modest ambition, he found such great difficulties in attaining small things, that he asked, one fine day, if it were not easier to attain to great ones. And almost immediately, supported by the Prince de Soubise and the Duc de Nivernois, still influenced by the Princesse de Rohan, he obtained the Venetian Embassy (2nd November 1750).¹

¹ *Mémoires Secrets de Duclos.* Vol. ii.—*Mémoires du Maréchal Duc de Richelieu.* Vol. ix.—*Notice sur le Cardinal de Loménie,* par Loménie de Brienne, à la fin des *Mémoires de Madame du Hausset.* Baudouin, 1824.—*Correspondence du Cardinal de Bernis, ministre d'état, avec M. Paris-Duvergney.* Londres, 1790.

It is easy to picture the astonishment and jealousy of the court, the alarm and distrust of public opinion, when the favour of Madame de Pompadour raised the ambassador to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Minister of Foreign Affairs! This agreeable scribbler of verses, this poet who decked the bosoms of the ladies with flowers, and whom Voltaire called the nosegay of Parnassus, this little vagabond Abbé, a second Abbé Bicheu, an Abbé-in-waiting on the favourite, whose purse, but recently, had been so slender, whose appetites were so modest. . . . To the public of the day it was a strange fortune, one of those scandals of promotion to which the chances and the unexpected elements in revolutions have since habituated France, but of which, at that time, the reign of the mistresses was just beginning the experiment, and inaugurating the example. However, prejudice did the Abbé de Bernis an injustice; the Abbé did not deserve the distrust which his past had earned him. His mind was superior to his manner, his heart to his tastes; his frivolous exterior, his amiable attitude, that fashion of playing with grave affairs, and bringing wit to bear upon things serious, was the outward mark of the age and the ministry, of Choiseul, of Maurepas, of the very ministers who have left after them the worthiest memory, and a glory almost austere.

Need we quote M. de Malesherbes, who forgot himself so far as to indulge in the childish trick of puffing smoke into the faces of his visitors? Bernis had depths as profound as all those men of appearances so frivolous. He possessed the hidden force of certain lymphatic natures, and the depth of those two-sided personages, affecting an absorption in pleasure, the world, balls, and suppers, then suddenly putting off all that, to become, in the secrecy of their vigils, workers underground, trusting no one, drawing up and copying out their dispatches with their own hands until daybreak. In such a part, the modicum of sleep which Bernis required was a precious resource. He could

be seen, during the negotiations for the treaty of Versailles, passing the whole day at court, all his evenings in company, at the card-table, for which he had no liking, in order to defeat the espionage of the ministers in office, and hide from them the vast labour of his nights. After Choiseul's example, Bernis also brought to the ministry the finesse and tact, the insinuating manners, the happy attitudes, the delicate knowledge and management of individuals which comes from communion with women, and which were so excellently revealed in him by the manner in which, during a sojourn of three days at Turin, he obtained possession of the substance of the secret treaty between Sardinia and Spain. He showed them again at Venice, when, through his relations with a former lover of La Eusenada, he informed Versailles, contradicting the dispatches of the Duc de Duras, of what was passing behind the curtains of the King of Spain at Madrid, and foretold the month and the week in which the Spanish ministry would fall.

The Abbé de Bernis, then, possessed many of the qualities of a minister, industry, understanding of the material at his command, a certain personal fascination, and even good luck; he had modesty also, and good sense. In the affair of the Austrian alliance he was courageous in his representations whilst conscious of the reservations he made. It would be giving a false view of the minister to depict him, in this negotiation, as proceeding as a free agent and being in actual sympathy with the ideas of Madame de Pompadour. Bernis, with his faint heart and pessimistic spirit, was incapable of being attracted by an enormous change in the alliances of France; in his view of things foreign, moreover, he clung almost superstitiously, with the whole French diplomacy, to the old policy of France, the anti-Austrian policy. Bernis was not, then, as has currently been believed, a docile, patient, and servile instrument in the hands of Madame de Pompadour. He was alarmed at

the upsetting of a tradition of alliances to which France was accustomed. Up to the last moment, he was in dread of shocking the susceptibilities, even the prejudices of public opinion. By this treaty he saw the King distrusted by all the little German powers, who would cease to regard him as their protector and the guarantor of the treaty of Westphalia. In the near future he saw France dragged into a war of which she must bear the cost and defray the expense; and he was eager in his representations to Madame de Pompadour as to the reproaches which she would incur from the nation, and the coldness she might meet with from the master, in the event of an unsuccessful issue.¹ These fears and objections, the menaces even of Bernis' counsels troubled no whit the resolution of Madame de Pompadour, who was more than ever eager to work upon the King's mind. She encouraged those instincts which inclined him towards an alliance with the Empress. She skilfully envenomed the repugnance felt by Louis XV. for the heretical King; she revived his recollection of Frederick's jests upon the amours of the King of France; and dazzled his eyes with the idea of a great Catholic alliance which should counterbalance the growing and encroaching power of the Protestant party in Europe. Finally, she entertained Louis XV., so eager for repose, with the hope of a peace which should lull his old age, and recall the peace in which the aged Fleury had cradled his childhood, and France had found rest. When Louis XV. had been won over to her projects, she suggested to him that Bernis should be charged with the task of conferring with the Comte de Staremburg upon the alliance; she pointed out to him adroitly that the Comte de Bernis, not being a minister, would be more suitable than any other person; and as the King was not convinced by this reason of the negotiator's excellence, Madame de Pompadour begged Louis XV. to remember that she

¹ *Mémoires Secrets*, par Duclos.

had not proposed Bernis for the ministry and that the idea had been solely his Majesty's.¹ She counted upon Bernis' character, his desire to please the King, his gratitude to herself, the temptation of greatness, to make him yield and sacrifice his own reluctance; and so it happened.

On the following day, the 22nd of September 1755, Madame de Pompadour, the Abbé de Bernis, and the Comte de Staremburg met at Babiole, in the little house below Bellevue; and from that conference, which was followed by sundry interviews in a lodging that Duclos possessed in the Luxembourg, there resulted the plan of a treaty proposed by the Empress, and affording France, it must be acknowledged, the fairest conditions which had for long been offered her. The Empress renounced the English alliance for ever. The Low Countries were given to a neutral prince of the House of Bourbon, the Duke of Parma. The ports which were acquired by France from Holland would, perforce, bind the Dutch Republic for the future to our alliance. Mons was ceded to France, and Luxembourg, the Gibraltar of Austria, cut down. Finally, the crown of Poland, which out of consideration for the Porte had maintained its republican character, was made hereditary.

In spite of the vast advantages to be reaped by France from this treaty, Madame de Pompadour dreaded the opposition of Messieurs de Puysieux and Saint-Severin, whom she had pushed on to the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, in order to keep the King at her side and away from the war.² Guessing that D'Argenson would be hostile, from the mere fact that the treaty was her work, she had the treaty drawn up by a committee composed of Rouillé, de Sechelles, and Saint-Florentin. The hesita-

¹ *Mémoires Secrets*, par Duclos.

² "Monsieur de Saint-Severin," Madame de Pompadour had said, "you are setting off for Aix-la-Chapelle; be very mindful to bring us back peace, whatever price we may have to pay for it."—*Mémoires du Maréchal Duc de Richelieu*. Vol. viii.

tions of the committee, insisting upon the guarantee of the States of the King of Prussia, who was engaged in negotiating a treaty with England, for the signing of which the Duc de Nivernois had just then come to Berlin (January 6, 1756); the disinclination of the Empress to accord that guarantee to a State which in any future war would be our enemy as well as her own; certain quite pardonable suspicions which gave Austria cause for hesitation in her quest of our alliance; our own insistence upon a treaty of neutrality with the Low Countries, which, in the event of the hostility of the Low Countries, should become defensive; finally, Madame de Pompadour's determination, which was every day more manifest, and which made her exact from the King that the alliance with Austria should be offensive; the chilling influence of Bernis upon this ardour; his counsels of moderation, which prevented Madame de Pompadour's zeal from entering into more undertakings than the court of Vienna asked of her;¹ these difficulties, complications, entanglements, delayed and modified the treaty of the first of May 1756, that treaty of Versailles, hailed by the populace with an enthusiasm which lasted until our reverses. And the campaign was inaugurated by the victory of Port-Mahon, taken by Richelieu, and the defeat of the English admiral, Byng.¹

Whilst war was being carried on in foreign parts, a civil war, such as had not been seen since the days of the League, blazed out in France between men's minds and consciences. The despotic and ultramontane passions of the Jesuits, brought back to power again with the cardinalate of Dubois and the ministry of the Cardinal de Fleury, the Gallican and republican passions of the Jansenists, who rose out of persecution with all the zeal and resentment which persecution bestows; those passions which brought the devotion and fury and ardour of faith into political questions, had found a great battlefield

¹ *Mémoires Secrets*, par Duclos. Vol. ii.

after the thousand petty squabbles which occupied the whole age, in the land-tax which Machault, the Minister of Finance, and (we must not forget it) the creature of Madame de Pompadour, wished to exact from ecclesiastical properties, in order to fill the empty treasury—empty in spite of the intelligence and probity of Orry's administration—the treasury that had been exhausted by the long war at the beginning of the reign of Louis XV.

At the first news of the edict of Madame de Pompadour's minister, the whole Church, in a sort of council, tumultuously called at the archiepiscopal palace of Paris, had been unanimous in considering the tithe and ecclesiastical property as one of the assets of the Church; in proclaiming the immunities of the Church to be as old as the monarchy and the constitution of the public law of France; in declaring that they must be defended, even at the cost of bloodshed, and in resolving to endeavour by every possible means to retain the privilege of offering gifts to the King, and of refusing to let them be taken by force. And when the edict was registered, the remonstrances of the Church pointed out to the King that the edict would detract from the respect due to religion "and that the ministers who govern nations would no longer possess the requisite authority to constrain the people, by the yoke of religion, to the obedience due to the sovereign." This prediction, this threat, was followed by a refusal, almost universal on the part of the bishops, to make a declaration to the Controller-General of their revenues; and the execution of the edict was rendered almost null by this refusal.¹

In this conflict with the Church, the court had the Parliament with it. It was also supported in its attack upon the upper clergy by the Jansenists, that third-estate in religion, that great party, powerful, energetic,

¹ *Mémoires du Maréchal Duc de Richelieu.* Vol. viii.—*Histoire de France pendant le dix-huitième siècle*, par Charles Lecretelle. Delaunay, 1812. Vol. iii.

united, as persecuted bodies are, distributed through the whole nation, represented at court, in possession of the middle classes and the inferior clergy, a portion of whom had no means of resisting the jealousy of their superiors. The court was supported by this army of men, convinced or ambitious, orators, parliamentarians, confessing and professing the maxims and morality of the primitive Church, defenders of Gallican liberties, enemies of the bull *Unigenitus*, grouped and armed in or around that Parliament which a portion of France looked upon as a counter - balance of despotism and the guarantor of a limited monarchy. War was no sooner declared than these allies of the court were there to wage it; and the struggle that ensued was not between the court, but between the Jansenists and the opposing party, the Molinist party. Remembering a warlike device of the Jansenists, when in their hour of triumph, through the nomination of the Cardinal de Noailles, they demanded certificates of confession from dying Molinists before granting them the Viaticum and the holy oils, the Molinists, through Christophe de Beaumont, in their turn exacted certificates of confession from Jansenists on their death-beds. The sacraments were refused for the first time, on account of Jansenism, to a councillor of the Châtelet, who was dying through his excesses, by the very zealous and ardent Curé of Saint-Étienne du Mont.¹ The Parliament summoned the Curé, but in vain; the Curé refused to give any explanation of his refusal to the magistrates, saying that he only owed one to the archbishop; and as the archbishop supported him, openly maintained the necessity of certificates of confession, degraded the superior of the general hospital of Paris for opposition to the bull *Unigenitus*, the Parliament issued a writ against the Curé and sent him to the prison of the Conciergerie. The Parliament made bold to offer the liveliest remonstrances

¹ *Journal Historique et Anecdotique du Règne de Louis XV.*, par Barbier. Vol. iii.

against the authority which the archbishop wished to assume over the general hospital, against the blame which the King attached to his criminal treatment of the Curé of Saint-Étienne du Mont, against the King's letters of command in the matter of the hospital; fresh remonstrances compelled the King to summon the Parliament with the order to bring up its registers, which he kept before him; it was as much as to take away all means for further deliberation from the Parliament, which the councillor Pinon was already anxious to urge to a startling protest, by ceasing all duty. The quarrel, temporarily appeased, broke out more violently upon a fresh refusal of the Curé of Saint-Étienne du Mont to administer the sacraments; and the Parliament once more issued a writ for his arrest. The King, in great embarrassment, thought to conciliate everyone and assure peace by quashing the procedure of the Parliament and, at the same time, forbidding the clergy to refuse the sacraments under the pretext of a bull or a certificate of confession; but this wise decision satisfied neither of the two parties. The clergy replied to it with a petition which was hawked from presbytery to presbytery by the Curé of Saint-Jean en Grève, begging the archbishop to uphold the certificates of confession. The Parliament immediately qualified this proceeding as an act directed against pacification, and in the name of the police laws issued a personal summons to the Curé. Once more the King quashed the proceedings; the Parliament then begged the King to accept its resignation, if he was determined to annul its acts; the quarrel waxed more vehement, it became a civil war of public opinion; and from Paris the imitation of these refusals of the sacraments, of these violent methods, these arguments and protests spread to the provinces and the whole of France. An attempt of the King to deprive the young, ardent, and turbulent party of the Parliament of the jurisdiction and prosecution of cases, no longer ascribed to the Chamber of Inquiries but to the high chamber, caused

the irritated Parliament to utter several decrees ordering parish priests to communicate the dying within an hour, issuing writs of arrest against them in the event of refusal, bidding the archbishop put an end to the scandal, and effecting a seizure of his revenues.

At the news of this audacious measure, the seizure of the revenues of the Archbishop of Paris, who wished to retire to a seminary and live there on an annual income of 2000 livres,¹ twenty-seven bishops assembled in council at Versailles and almost forced the King's door. Almost at the same time, the President of the Parliament arrived at Versailles and begged the King's permission to convoke the Parliament, "inviting him on behalf of the Parliament to be present at the session." This *invitation* given by the Parliament to the King, who was not yet Louis XVI., brought upon the Parliament the prohibition of the convocation of peers, whilst a *lettre de cachet* was sent to the Soeur Perpétue, the pretext and occasion of the Parliament's exasperation, the sick woman paid by the Jansenist party to die without undue haste, in order to give the Parliament time to take measures against the refusal of the sacraments. There was at this time, within the Parliament, an essay and first menace, as it were, of the Revolution of 1789. The words "*arbitrary acts*" were uttered aloud, and the greatest outburst of the eloquence of Mirabeau was heralded, rivalled already at their meetings by the Presidents de Cotte, Meinières, Clément, De Saint-Vincent, and that Abbé Chauvelin who inherited the legacy of courage and violence of the Abbé Pucelle. The remonstrances were issued on the 5th of August, and presented to the King by Richelieu and the Prince de Conti. The King refused to read them, then decided to hear them read by his minister, D'Argenson. His reply was the banishment or imprisonment, notified by the musketeers, of all the presidents of inquests and requests; the high chamber was exiled to Pontoise, and

¹ *Journal Historique de Barbier.* Vol. iii.

a vacation chamber, composed of councillors of State and masters of requests, formed to take the place of Parliament. It took up its abode in the Convent of the Grands Augustins, in the midst of the cries and hooting of the people: Long live the Parliament! And Louis XV., having heard of the emotion of the Parisians, let fall this prophetic sentence: "*I know the populace of Paris, it must have its remonstrances and spectacles, and one day, perhaps, something far worse than all that.*"

Towards the beginning of 1754, the public discontent was intensified. The King was beset on all sides by anonymous threats, warnings of courtiers, the dreads of his intimates, telling him of the irritable state of people's minds and the excitement of the populace. The King's high chamber was left without authority. The exiled Parliament only increased in popularity. The King, rendered uneasy by all these manifestations of opinion, did not feel strong enough to vindicate his arbitrary act. Serious negotiations were entered into with Maupeon, who had inclinations towards the court, and received the King's assurance that he would be made Keeper of the Seals or Chancellor; and the Parliament returned to Paris in triumph, and amid the applause of the markets, almost at the same moment that saw the entrance into life and history of him who was to be Louis XVI. Louis XV., faithful to his spirit of conciliation and neutrality, endeavoured to set off the signification of this victory of the Parliament, and to minimise its effects with the Church and the arch-Episcopacy; he had Machault transferred to the Navy, and gave an abbey to the Curé of Saint-Etienne du Mont. But these concessions in no respect changed the disposition of the Archbishop and the parish of Saint-Etienne du Mont, who continued openly to refuse the Viaticum to the dying; the King became impatient, and the Parliament, so sensitive to the arbitrary nature of *lettres de cachet* when they were applied to the Soeur Perpétue, registered, without remonstrance, the exile of

the Archbishop of Paris, who had answered the King, through Richelieu : "My conscience does not allow me to make any terms."¹

To find an issue from the difficulties of the situation, which were incessantly being renewed, to escape from the odium of the arbitrary acts to which it was forced, the court cast its eyes upon some thirty bishops, for the most part men of pleasure, rarely in their sees, and most often in Paris or paying court at Versailles, and sufficiently men of the world to submit to conditions against which the somewhat rugged conscience of the Archbishop revolted. They let themselves be flattered by the notion inspired in them by the court, that if they should succeed in compelling the French clergy to suspend the certificates of confession, the King would take severe measures with the Parliament, which had sheltered itself behind that pretext, in order to revolt against royalty, and, in a trice, the Church of France was divided into two clergies : the clergy of the court party, the worldly, tolerant clergy, the *feuillant* clergy, as they were called, in allusion to the *feuille* or list of benefices which was kept by one of its members, the Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld, and the rigid, uncompromising clergy, the clergy dubbed *Theatine*, after its leader, Boyer, once a Theatine monk.

During this period, the pilgrimages of curés from Paris and the provinces, who called upon the exiled Archbishop to support him in his insistence upon certificates of confession, went on uninterruptedly. The Parliament took advantage of them to declare that it was its duty to put down illegal meetings, and to ask the King ironically whether these meetings were held at his command. This led to a dispute which flamed out furiously in consequence of the privilege conferred by the King upon the high council of notifying its decrees to the inferior tribunals ; the Parliament invited the peers and princes to make an appearance in the court in order to frustrate

¹ *Mémoires du Duc de Richelieu.* Vol. viii.

the manœuvres of the members of the high council, and the King was compelled to forbid the peers to attend the Parliament. But the Parliament, threatened and intractable, delighted to have brought the privileges of the peers to the bar, and involved them in its quarrel, petitioned the King to settle a question which concerned "fundamental laws, the police of the kingdom, the very being of the peerage," and goaded him into an answer which compromised him. The tax of one-twentieth could not be carried out in the midst of so much opposition. The cost of the war that ended in 1748 had not been met, and the war of 1756 required money. In order to meet the most pressing liabilities, the King, on the 7th of June 1756, imposed a further tax of one-twentieth, similar to that which was levied, or should have been levied, since 1746. In a second edict, the King ordered the continuation for ten years of the penny in the livre, created in 1746, until the State debts should be paid off; at the same time, the King issued 1,800,000 livres of hereditary annuities upon the profit of the tithe of a penny in the livre. Finally, in a third edict, the King postponed payment of dues already exacted from the town of Paris. The Parliament, at once, issued remonstrances. The King, wearied out, declared that he would no longer listen either to representations or remonstrances; and at a *bed of justice* held with full military state, the three edicts were registered, whilst the voice of Madame de Pompadour, surrounded by her court of women, was heard from a tribune accusing the Parliament "of making itself interesting in the eyes of the people, posing as its would-be protector." On the day after the *bed of justice* the war broke out again. The Parliament made fresh remonstrances, and entered into an alliance with the court, which it induced to repudiate the registrations of the *bed of justice*. The Archbishop of Paris, not forgiving the court for the repeal of the Parliament, and comparing himself with Saint Basil, persecuted by the

Emperor Valens, forbade the Parisians, under pain of excommunication, to retain the remonstrances or printed extracts from the registers of the Parliament, and, further, prohibited them, under the same penalty, from obeying the Parliament. The moderation of Pope Benedict XIV. came to the court's assistance ; he published an encyclical, which, bringing to the Archbishop the support of the Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld and the Cardinal de Luynes, for a moment disarmed it. But the Parliament, far from being appeased, exceeded its prerogative to the extent of condemning the Pope's letter as well as a dissertation upon the Immaculate Conception. It was the last victory of Parliamentarians. The King, his scruples reassured by the Papal encyclical, in peace with his conscience, in peace with his clergy, brought a long-conceived plan to fulfilment. A *bed of justice* was appointed for the 13th December 1756. On that day the King renewed the law of silence, without prejudicing the rights of the Bishops, attributed the jurisdiction over the refusal of the sacraments to the ecclesiastical judges, suppressed appeals as an abuse, and prohibited the Parliaments from ordering their administration ; it was depriving the Parliament of its power and influence, by robbing it of its means of opposition and popularity ; the King further changed the political constitution of the Parliament ; he suppressed two chambers of inquests, sixty posts of lay councillors, four clerical councillors ; he granted to the high chamber alone the power to hear appeals. The Parliament was in future only to assemble upon the decision of the high chamber ; the right to debate was only granted after ten years' service in the Council ; no denunciation was to take place except through the public ministry of the Procuror-General. Finally, the King forbade the Parliament, thus tamed and decimated, reduced and subjugated, to suspend the administration of justice under penalties.

The public wrath, the indignation of the people, that people of the Fronde, burst out in the streets. And

against whom? Against Madame de Pompadour—against “*the King's strumpet.*”¹

The popular voice was not deceived in attributing to the favourite a great part in these disputes which seemed to have so little to do with her. Madame de Pompadour deserved her large share of unpopularity, owing to the large share she had taken in that battle of minds and consciences. She is, in fact, by the side of the King, and behind him, the soul of the war which brings division between the clergy and the Parliament, the Parliament and the King. When Machault's edict had appeared, the whole clergy had looked upon it as a manœuvre of the fair philosopher to diminish the prestige of the Church. And Boyer said to the Dauphin, when exciting him against the mistress: “The time is no longer when Kings' favourites partly redeemed the irregularity and indelicacy of their conduct by their respect for religion and devotion to the clergy of France. This Voltaire, this open atheist, is going to dominate at court, and, influenced by Madame de Pompadour, he will drive away all the prelates with his pamphlets and ridicule. . . .”²

These apprehensions of Boyer and the party he represented but little exaggerated the real state of things, the threatening aspect of the future and the character and bearing of the alliance between Voltaire and the mistress.

Voltaire, indeed, was not only Madame de Pompadour's courtier, but also her tool, her man, and her weapon of attack. Satires, epigrams, literary executions, tasteful tempers, all that in him seemed like the work of a friend, the pleading of a poet *pro domo sua*, masked and served the vengeance of Madame de Pompadour; and in that police of Parnassus, made of strokes of irony, it was at the political enemies of the Marquise that he aimed. With his shower of *Whens* and *Ifs* and *Whys* and

¹ *Mémoires du Maréchal Duc de Richelieu.* Vol. viii.
■ *Ibid.*

Wherfore, Whos and Whats, he cudgelled not Lefranc de Pompignau, but the party of the Dauphin and the Dauphin himself. A key to Voltaire's pamphlets is a fact not to be forgotten in the history of Madame de Pompadour. Thus bound to Voltaire by services and her need of his wit, the mistress favoured him with her friendship and patronage as long as she lived, in spite of coolnesses, susceptibilities, and petty squabbles, and Voltaire remained her most devoted pensioner. He had to thank her for having retained the 1000 livres which he received from the King's treasury. He shared the resentment and rancour of the favourite against Boyer, whom he accused of having compelled him to take refuge in Holland; he defended and consoled her all through her reign by his attacks upon those "*imbecile bigots of almoners*"; he devoted to her his flattery and his pen, and when Madame de Pompadour died he gave her the great canonisation of his party, proclaiming her a *philosopher*.¹

Already designated by this alliance and connection to hate the partisans of the Church, Voltaire's friend seemed to defy and exasperate them by the protection she extended to all Voltaire's friends, to his army, to all the enemies of the rights and privileges of the Church, the infidels and encyclopædist, to those men, in short, who were mathematically formulating the Revolution, and giving their Utopias the basis and inexorable rigour of figures, the economists who were labouring to impose taxation upon the nobles and the clergy. Strange contradiction! Whilst the Queen's ante-chamber resounded with prayers and supplications, naïvely calling down the punishment of Heaven upon Voltaire's head, there existed in Versailles, in the palace of Louis XIV., the sanctuary of royalty, a little apartment adjoining the apartment of Madame de Pompadour, where every theory that threatened royalty, the clergy, the nobility, found voice

¹ *Correspondence générale of Voltaire, passim.*

and volume in the fever and revolt of words of death. This little apartment, this cave of honest folk, the first domicile of political economy, was inhabited by the *master*,—it was thus that the disciples spoke of Doctor Quesnay, whose discretion, at the time when the Comtesse d'Estrades had an epileptic fit, had brought him into favour with Madame de Pompadour, and from Madame de Pompadour's favour to the post of consulting physician to the King. Arrived at this, Quesnay had become a sort of favourite. The King had given him arms of his own invention ; three pansies which he had taken one day from a vase of flowers on the Marquise's mantelpiece, saying to the Doctor, with his charming grace : "I give you arms which speak."¹ On another day, overcoming his habitual antipathy towards men of science and letters, the King had carried his amiability towards the *thinker* so far as to compose, himself, two or three pages of his *Essays in Psychology*. The man was of that race of courtiers of the Danube, of whom, in that age, Duclos was the accomplished type. He was one of those rough and harsh characters, sincere and brusque in manner, republican in feeling and maxims, who know so well how to come to terms with monarchy, to live by scandal or favour in communion with the great, and amid the graces of a court ; to redeem by the eccentricity and good-nature of their attitude, the contradiction between their principles and their fortune, to keep their self-respect by quarrelling, not with the master, but with the ministers and the government, to feign the ill-humours of a stubborn conscience, and to find the bread they eat in a sinecure bitter.

This profession was already at that day one of profit. While losing nothing, risking nothing in the way of favour, one obtained indulgence, like some querulous but amiable child, the respect of the public as an

¹ *Mémoires Historiques pendant la faveur de Madame de Pompadour.* Bertrand, 1802.

ndependent character and the sympathy of opinion as a friend of humanity, a title in great request since the *Friend of Man* of the Marquis de Mirabeau. And Quesnay was not deceived in his expectations; he had immediately found his place in the first rank of the family, by the side of the Marquis d'Argenson, so prone to virtuous indignation, so full of the furies and tempers of a *good citizen* when the minister is absent. None the less, within such narrow range of the King's ear, a certain skill and subtlety had to be brought to this part of opposition. Quesnay eluded the chief dangers of the part by playing Æsop and veiling his frankness in pretty fables with which the King's mind was diverted as by a moral story.¹ Such was the man around whom the voices, rendered bold by the discussion of the highest matters, the thoughts that hearkened to the future, the theories which made a clean sweep of the existing foundations of that age, shook the columns of the Temple with their clamour, and Versailles with their echo. It was there, in the apartment of the Pompadour's physician, that the first club agitated, for the first time, the downfall of the monarchy and the Church.

What indictments, what passions, what accusations, what speeches and epithets, in which there is already the ring of revolution, gathered tempests and thunder in that corner of the palace. There, to the tune of Quesnay's outcry against the *infamous ministry*, all the springs of authority were taken out, the rights of powers reviewed and tested, laws discussed, governments compared, upheavals planned by those fanatics of the public welfare—Quesnay, the elder Mirabeau, Beaudeau, and Roubeau. After discussions upon the net produce and fruit of the earth, the conversation, amid the intoxication of ideas, would take a tone so violent that it caused Duclos to say "that he would be forced to go to vespers and high mass." It was the beginning of the revolution in men's minds and

¹ *Mémoires de Madame du Hausset.*

speech ; terror even entered in, and it was in the ante-chamber of the mistress of Louis XV., in the presence of that mistress's brother, after a condemnation of the men and matters of the time, that La Rivière let fall these prophetic words : "The kingdom can only be regenerated by some great internal upheaval, but woe to those who shall be alive then ! The French people has a heavy hand. . . ." ¹ The woman, who, hard by her own chamber, offered this asylum and lecture-hall to the theoretical conspiracy of the economists, must of necessity be looked upon by the Church as a personal enemy. The religious zeal of Boyer and his friends, of the Royal family, of the Dauphin, the words of the clergy, the alarms and resentments of men's consciences, were directed against her ; and there arose in the Church one of those violent and heroic saints such as we find in the early ages of Christendom, to hurl anathema in her face.

This priest of antique virtue, of an inflexible heart, so unmoved by the temptation of greatness that Louis XV. had been compelled to summon him three times before he would leave his see of Vienne ; this Archbishop of Paris, poor in the midst of his revenues of 600,000 livres, which were spent in alms-giving, in charities that extended beyond the French frontiers, that went even to Ireland, Christopher de Beaumont, harsh and pitiless towards himself, brought the inflexibility of his conscience into spiritual matters ; and the passions of his energetic and sombre soul, checked and stemmed to no purpose, flamed forth in furious, almost bloodthirsty, fashion in the fervour of his intolerance. He represented and summed up in his own person all the rage of his order against Madame de Pompadour, whom he accused of all the misfortunes of the age, whom he accused of perverting her King, whom he accused of seeking the downfall of religion by a settled plan with her friends. He accused her, and the accusation was true, of seeking to obtain possession of the list of

¹ *Mémoires de Madame du Hausset.*

benefices either by the nomination of a bishop selected from amongst the least austere, or by the partition of this list, which had been withdrawn from the hands of the Church and given to four lay ministers, who were her creatures ; he accused her of selecting those who were to be given benefices on a basis of secret proofs of irreligion furnished her by the police. And in his pastorals he gave vent to his bitter indignation. Almost mentioning the favourite by name, he traced back to her every evil and every scandal, the difficulties of the State and the tears of the Church ; and whilst his public utterances struck her so unsparingly amid that *mock science* which she protected and encouraged,¹ in his private conversation he indulged in prayers unworthy of and calumniating him ; he forgot himself in his fits of anger, so far as to say that "he would like to see her burned. . . ."

But if Madame de Pompadour met with such hatred from Churchmen and the Church party, the popularity which she might thereby have earned from her age, was effaced by the vast and furious unpopularity which ensued to her as the most formidable enemy of Jansenism and the Parliament. To the Parliament, the favourite was the primary cause of the financial embarrassment, the increase in the public debt. The Parliamentarians knew, from the indiscretion of her own words, of her hostile dispositions "*towards the unworthy citizens who take advantage of the needs of the State in order to make their master commit acts of weakness.*"² They were not ignorant of her obstinate will, of the energy of her resolutions. In their view, it was the favourite who was responsible for the arbitrary acts of the King ; it was she who had inspired and dictated them ; it was she who had evoked the master in that King who had nothing individual but his weakness ; it was she, in short, who had shorn royalty of the equilibrium given

¹ *Mémoires du Maréchal Duc de Richelieu.* Vol. viii.

² Letter from Madame de Pompadour to the Duc d'Aiguillon. *Correspondence Littéraire*, September 1857.

to it by the Parliament and turned the monarchy into a despotism. And the voices of the Parliamentarians were raised as loudly against Madame de Pompadour as the voices of the Church, sowing amongst the people the maldictions and the execrations which even death would not hush around the favourite's bier.

END OF VOL. I.

